



救済の日

西岡兄妹

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The Day
of Salvation
Nishoka Kyoudai

貴林工舎

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青林工藝舎

救濟の日



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西岡兄弟
妹

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THE DAY OF SALVATION

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MANGA.MEGCHAN.COM/BLOG
TWITTER @ MEGCHANS_SCANS

RAWS - ELEMHUNTER
TRANSLATION (MANGA + 1ST AFTERWORD) - MEGCHAN
TRANSLATION (2ND AFTERWORD) - LAIKA
CLEANING / TYPESETTING - LAIKA

CH. 1

INFANT

救

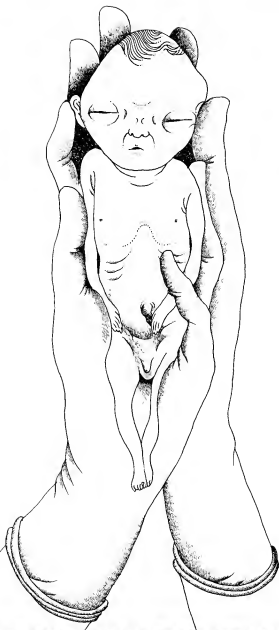
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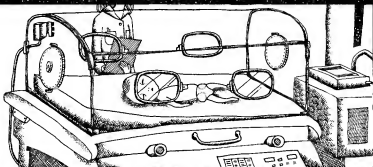


THE CHILD
WAS A
1,500
GRAM
PREEMIE.



IT WAS
A BOY.

AND PUT
INTO AN
INCUBATOR.



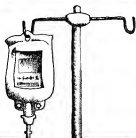
IMMEDIATELY
AFTER BIRTH,
HE WAS TAKEN
FROM MY WIFE

SCREAM-
ING AND
CRYING.

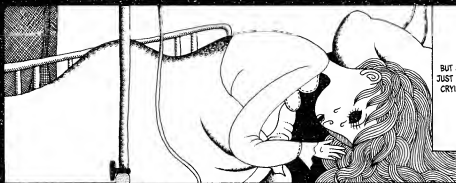


MY
WIFE
WENT
HALF
MAD.

AND GAVE
HER A
TRANQUIL-
IZER TO
CALM HER,



THEY
HOOKED
HER UP
TO AN
IV DRIP.

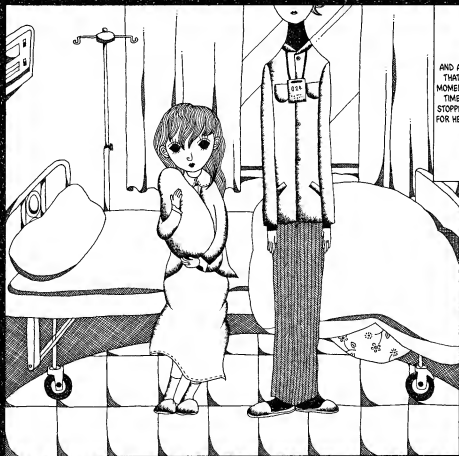


BUT SHE
JUST KEPT
CRYING.

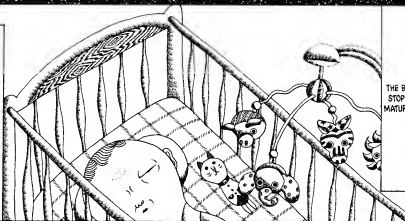
MY WIFE
WAS
FINALLY
ALLOWED
TO HOLD
THE BABY.

AFTER
A FEW
WEEKS,

AND AT
THAT
MOMENT,
TIME STOPPED
FOR HER.

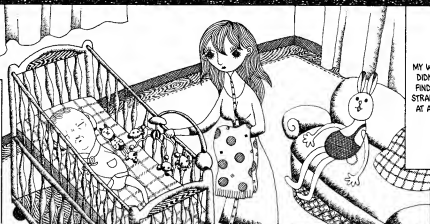


HE GOT
BIGGER,
BUT HIS
APPEARANCE
WAS STILL
THAT OF A
NEWBORN
BABY AND
SHOWED NO
SIGNS OF
CHANGING.



THE BABY
STOPPED
MATURING.

AND JUST
ACCEPTED
THIS
REALITY.



MY WIFE
DIDN'T
FIND IT
STRANGE
AT ALL.

I JUST
CHOSE
SOME-
THING
RANDOM
FOR HIS
BIRTH
RECORDS.



"HE'S STILL
JUST A
TINY BABY,"
SHE SAID
AND DIDN'T
BOTHR TO
GIVE HIM
A NAME.



WEEKS PASSED,
THEN MONTHS,
AND THEN
TWO YEARS.

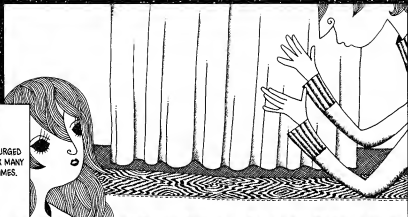
MY WIFE STILL
LOVINGLY
BREASTFED
THIS CREATURE
THAT WAS
ALMOST TEN
KILOGRAMS
AND LOOKED
LIKE NOTHING
MORE THAN
A DEFORMED
MONKEY.

WITH MY
ARMS
FOLDED
AND DID
NOTHING.



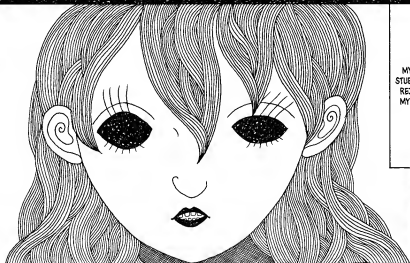
IT'S NOT
AS IF
I JUST
STOOD
THERE

I URGED
HER MANY
TIMES.



"THIS CHILD IS ILL,
OR, AT THE VERY
LEAST, HAS SOME
SORT OF SYNDROME,
SO WE SHOULD TAKE
HIM TO THE DOCTOR
OR A SPECIALIST TO
GET CHECKED OUT."

AND STARED
AT ME AS
IF I WERE
THE DEVIL.



MY WIFE
STUBBORNLY
REJECTED
MY PLEAS

IT WAS
THE SAME
FOR HER.

MY WIFE
SHOWED
NO SEXUAL
DESIRE.
ANIMALS
DON'T MATE
WHILE
THEY'RE
NURSING.



SHE
FRANTI-
CALLY
PUSHED
ME
AWAY.

ONE NIGHT,
I TRIED TO
MAKE LOVE
TO HER.





HER
BREASTS
WERE
COVERED
IN VEINS,
AND HER
SWOLLEN
NIPPLES,
DARK AND
MOIST.

HER
CHEST
WAS
EX-
POSED.



SEEING
THEM,
I LOST MY
ERECTION.



AFTER
UTTERING
THOSE
WORDS,
MY WIFE
NEVER
SPOKE
TO ME
AGAIN.



"THAT'S
WHAT
THEY
CALL
RAPE."

THE RHYTHM OF
HER DAILY LIFE
ADAPTED TO THIS
PATTERN, AND
SHE DIDN'T SEEM
PARTICULARLY
BOTHERED BY IT.



EACH
TIME HE
CRIED,
MY WIFE
NURSED
HIM OR
CHANGED
HIS
DIAPER.



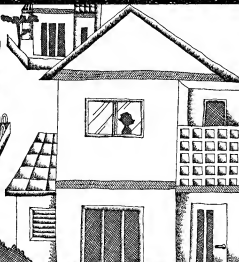
THE
BABY
WOKE
AND
CRIED
ONCE
EVERY
TWO
HOURS.

SPENDING THE
NIGHT LIKE THAT
WITH MY WIFE,
WHO WOULDN'T
SPEAK TO ME AND
CLEARLY BORE
ME ILL WILL,
WAS AGONY.



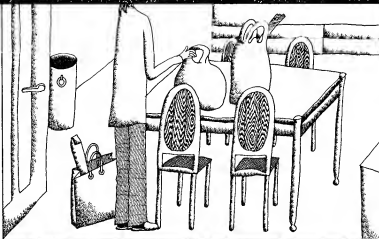
BUT THE SAME
COULDN'T BE
SAID FOR ME.
I HAD A JOB.

AND WE
WERE ABLE
TO SLEEP
SEPARATELY.
MY WIFE AND
CHILD IN THE
NURSERY
DOWNSTAIRS
AND MYSELF
UPSTAIRS.



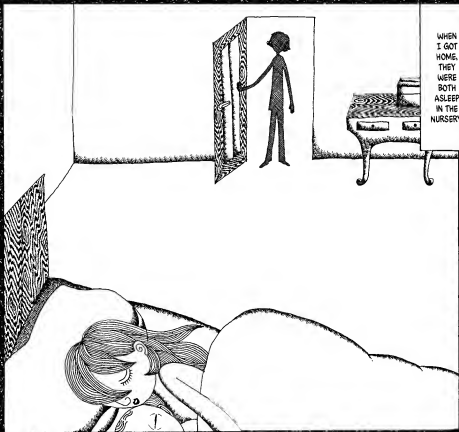
THANKFULLY,
BEFORE
THE BABY
WAS BORN,
I'D BOUGHT
A HOUSE
THAT WE
COULDN'T
REALLY
AFFORD.

MY WIFE
NEVER SET
FOOT OUT OF
THE HOUSE.
ASIDE FROM
HOUSEWORK,
ALL SHE EVER
DID WAS
LOOK AFTER
THE BABY.



ONE SUNDAY
AFTERNOON,
I RETURNED
HOME WITH
A WEEK'S
WORTH OF
GROCERIES.

WHEN
I GOT
HOME,
THEY
WERE
BOTH
ASLEEP
IN THE
NURSERY.





I WAS
EXHAUSTED
AND AT
THE END OF
MY ROPE.

THERE'S USUALLY
NOTHING CUTER
THAN A TWO
YEAR OLD, YET
THE STRANGE
CREATURE THAT
WAS BREATHING
SHALLOWLY IN
BED HAD WISPY
HAIR, SWOLLEN
EYELIDS, AND
REDDISH SKIN.



WITH THIS
GIANT INFANT
AND THIS
MADWOMAN.

MUST
I LIVE

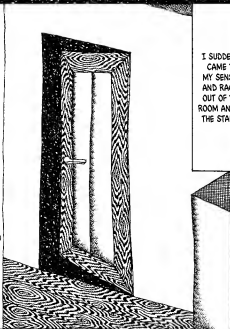
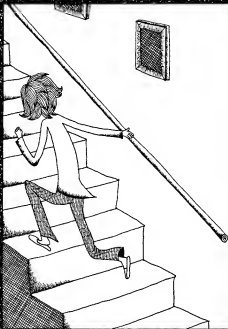
HOW
MANY
MORE
YEARS



I BROUGHT
MY HAND
TO THE
CHILD'S
THROAT.

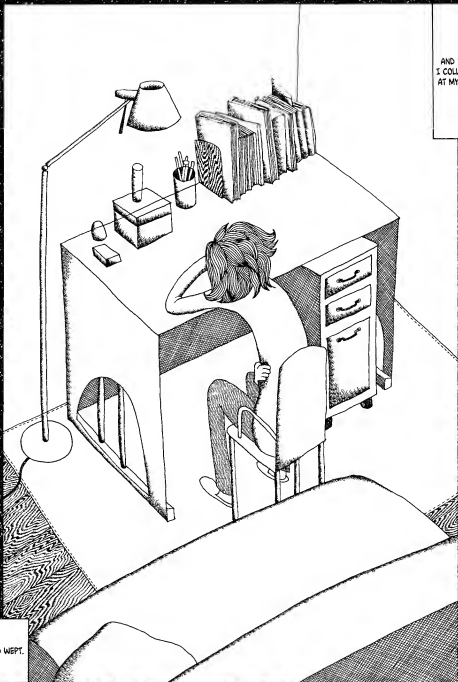


HE CRACK-
ED OPEN
HIS EYES.

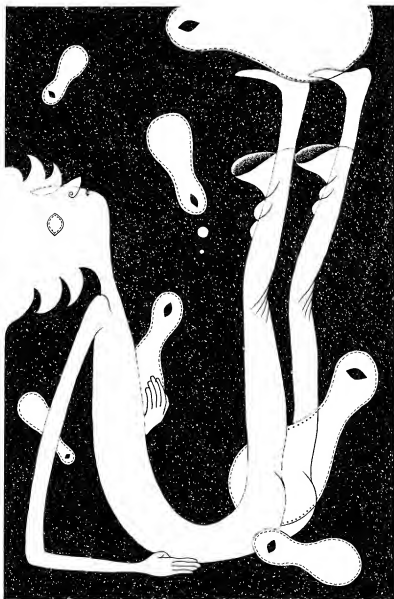


I SUDDENLY
CAME TO
MY SENSES
AND RACED
OUT OF THE
ROOM AND UP
THE STAIRS.

AND THEN,
I COLLAPSED
AT MY DESK.



AND WEPT.





I AWAKENED TO A
PIERCING
SILENCE.



I WAS IN
BED IN MY
PAJAMAS.

HOW STRANGE.
THE LAST THING
I REMEMBERED
WAS NODDING
OFF IN TEARS
AT MY DESK.



THE
SUNLIGHT
COMING
THROUGH
THE
CURTAINS
WAS
STRANGELY
BRIGHT.

WHAT
TIME
WAS
IT?

THE
CLOCK
THAT
WORKED
JUST
FINE ALL
THESE
YEARS
HAD
STOPPED.

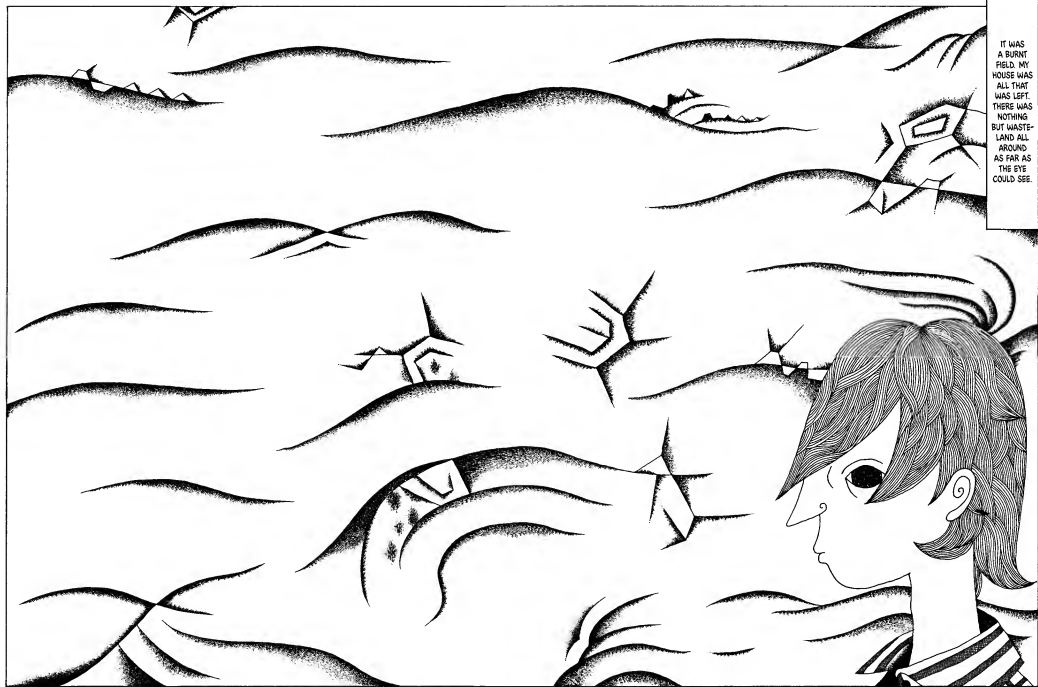


I FELT
UNEASY AS
I PULLED
BACK THE
CURTAIN.

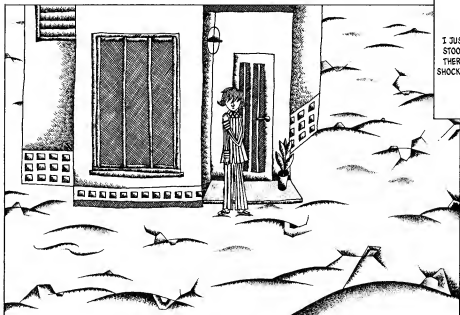
I COULDN'T
BELIEVE
MY EYES.
THE SIGHT
GREETING
ME FROM
MY SECOND
FLOOR
WINDOW

WAS
SCORCHED
EARTH.

I RAN
OUTSIDE
IN MY
PAJAMAS.



IT WAS
A BURNT
FIELD. MY
HOUSE WAS
ALL THAT
WAS LEFT.
THERE WAS
NOTHING
BUT WASTE-
LAND ALL
AROUND
AS FAR AS
THE EYE
COULD SEE.



I JUST
STOOD
THERE
SHOCKED.



"A WAR,"
I THOUGHT.
YES, THIS
WAS A WAR.

FOR SOME
REASON,
I WAS
CERTAIN.
IT HAD
FINALLY
BEGIN.



I TOOK
A STEP.

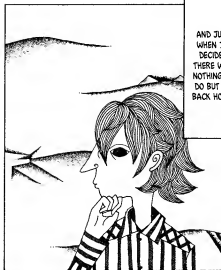
THERE WASN'T
A SINGLE
CORPSE LEFT
BEHIND. NO
SIGN THAT
ANYONE HAD
EVER LIVED
HERE. WHEN
HAD THEY
MADE SUCH
A WEAPON?

AND WHAT
A WAR
IT WAS.

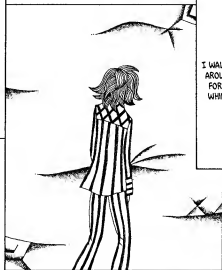
WITH AN
UNCON-
FIRMED
CERTAINTY.

I WALKED
THROUGH THE
WASTELAND.

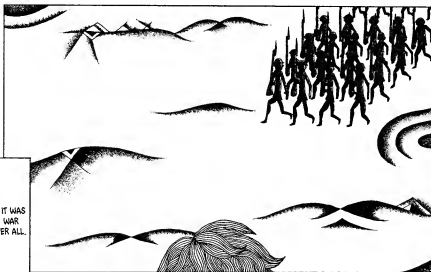
THIS WAS
A WAR LIKE
NOTHING
MANKIND
HAD EVER
ENCOUNTERED.



AND JUST
WHEN I'D
DECIDED
THERE WAS
NOTHING TO
DO BUT GO
BACK HOME,



I WALKED
AROUND
FOR A
WHILE,



I SAW A
SQUAD OF
SOLDIERS
MARCHING
IN MY
DIRECTION.

SO IT WAS
A WAR
AFTER ALL.



THEY
STOPPED
THEIR
MARCH
AND
SPREAD
OUT.

IT SEEMED
THEY WERE
LOOKING
FOR SOME-
THING IN
THE RUINS
OF THE FIRE.



AND WHEN-
EVER THEY
FOUND WHAT
THEY WERE
LOOKING
FOR, THEY
POKED THE
GROUND
WITH THEIR
MUSKETS.

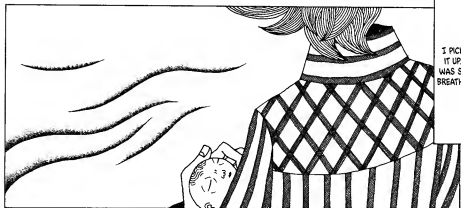
"WAAAAH!"
CAME THE
SOUND OF
A NEWBORN
BABY'S CRY.
I COULDN'T
IMAGINE
WHAT THEY
WERE DOING.



I GLANCED
DOWN AT
MY FEET.



AND CURLED
UP, IN THE
REMAINS OF
A GUTTER,
WAS A FETUS
WITH ITS
UMBILICAL
CORD STILL
ATTACHED.



I PICKED
IT UP. IT
WAS STILL
BREATHING.

I HAD
NO IDEA
WHAT
THESE
FETUSES
WERE
DOING
IN THE
RUINS
OF THIS
TOWN.



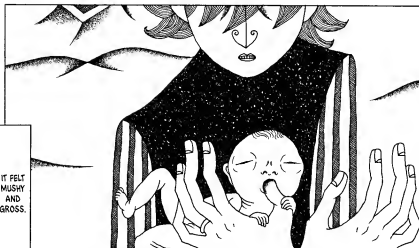
THE SOLDIERS
WERE KILLING
THE FETUSES.

BUT I HELD
THE FETUS
CLOSE AS IF
TO PROTECT
IT OUT OF
INSTINCT.



IT FELT
MUSHY
AND
GROSS.

IN THAT
INSTANT,
THE FETUS
BEGAN
SUCKING ON
MY LEFT
THUMB.



I PULLED,
BUT IT
WOULDN'T
COME OFF.



IT MUST'VE
MISTAKEN
MY THUMB
FOR ITS
MOTHER'S
NIPPLE.



THAT
TOOTHLESS
MOUTH
SUCKED ON
MY THUMB
WITH ALL
ITS MIGHT.



BUT IT
REFUSED
TO LET GO.

I TRIED
TO PRY
OPEN ITS
MOUTH.



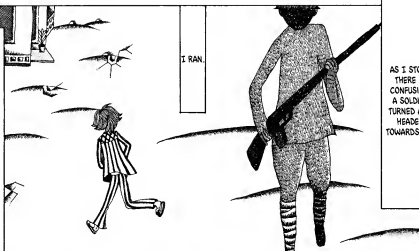
I SWUNG
IT AROUND.

BUT I HAD
THE DISTINCT
SENSATION
THAT, LITTLE
BY LITTLE,
SOMETHING
WAS BEING
SUCKED OUT
FROM ME.



I DON'T
KNOW WHAT
IT WAS
SUCKING.
OF COURSE,
NO MILK
WOULD COME
OUT, AND IT
DIDN'T FEEL
LIKE IT WAS
SUCKING
MY BLOOD.

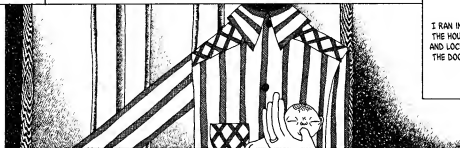
I WASN'T TRYING TO PROTECT THE CHILD, BUT I FELT I WAS IN DANGER.



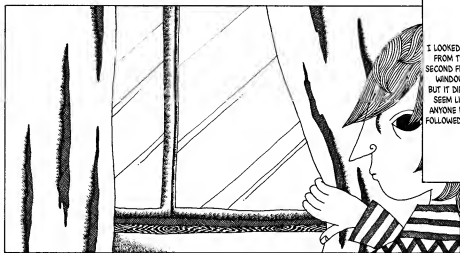
I RAN.

AS I STOOD THERE IN CONFUSION, A SOLDIER TURNED AND HEADED TOWARDS ME.

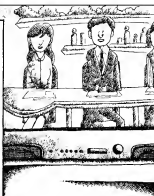
I RAN INTO THE HOUSE AND LOCKED THE DOOR.



I LOOKED OUT FROM THE SECOND FLOOR WINDOW, BUT IT DIDN'T SEEM LIKE ANYONE HAD FOLLOWED ME.



IT WAS SHOWING THE USUAL MORNING NEWS - CELEBRITY NEWS. IN FACT, THEY WERE GOING ON AND ON ABOUT SOME CELEBRITY GETTING DIVORCED.



I WONDERED IF IT WOULD EVEN TURN ON, BUT IT DID.



RELIEVED, I TURNED ON THE TV.

I WATCHED FOR A WHILE, BUT THEY DIDN'T MENTION THE WAR AT ALL AND FINALLY MOVED ON TO THE WEATHER REPORT.

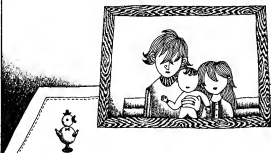


WE WERE AT WAR. MY WHOLE TOWN HAD BEEN DESTROYED. WHAT ON EARTH WAS GOING ON?



I TURNED OFF THE TV.

I HAD A YOUNG WIFE AND A CUTE TWO-YEAR-OLD SON WHO LOOKED JUST LIKE ME. THE TWO OF THEM SHOULD HAVE BEEN ASLEEP IN THE NURSERY. I SOMETIMES WORKED LATE, SO I SLEPT UPSTAIRS IN A SEPARATE BEDROOM.



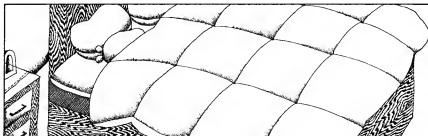
I DON'T KNOW WHY IT HADN'T OCCURRED TO ME EARLIER, BUT SUDDENLY, I WAS WORRIED ABOUT MY WIFE AND CHILD.



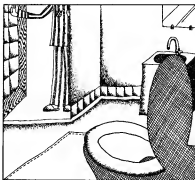
I OPENED
THE DOOR
TO THE
NURSERY.



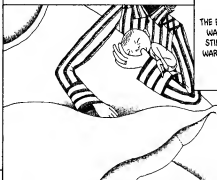
I HEADED
DOWN-
STAIRS.



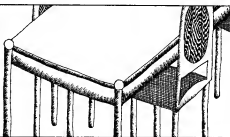
THEY
WEREN'T
THERE.



I SEARCH-
ED THE
WHOLE
HOUSE,
BUT THEY
WERE
NOWHERE
TO BE
FOUND.



THE BED
WAS
STILL
WARM.



HAD THEY
BECOME
CASUALTIES
OF WAR?

WHEN
THE
PHONE
RANG.

RESTLESS
WITH
WORRY,
I WENT
TO THE
PHONE TO
CALL MY
WIFE'S
PARENTS

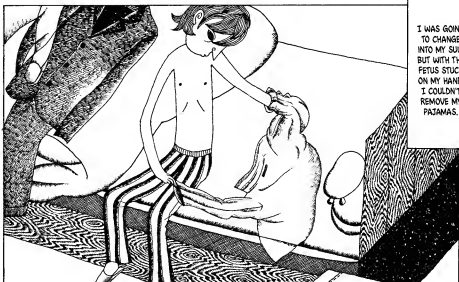
"NOW'S NOT
THE TIME."
"THAT'S FOR
DAMN SURE.
ANYWAY, THIS
IS URGENT.
GET IN HERE
NOW OR YOU'RE
FIRED. FIRED,
YOU HEAR?"
WITH THAT,
HE HUNG
UP ON ME.

"WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING?
GET IN
HERE,"
MY BOSS
SAID
ANGRILY.

IT WAS
MY WORK.

MAYBE
MY WIFE
AND SON
HAD GONE
TO HER
PARENTS'
AS THEY
OFTEN DID.

BUT IF HE
WAS ABLE TO
CALL ME, MY
WORKPLACE
MUST BE ALL
RIGHT. IF I GO
THERE, MAYBE
I COULD LEARN
SOMETHING.
I DECIDED TO
GO TO WORK.



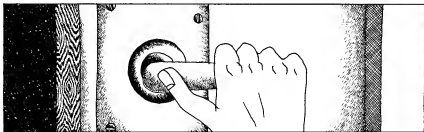
I WAS GOING TO CHANGE INTO MY SUIT, BUT WITH THE FETUS STUCK ON MY HAND, I COULDN'T REMOVE MY PAJAMAS.



I PUT ON MY SHOES.



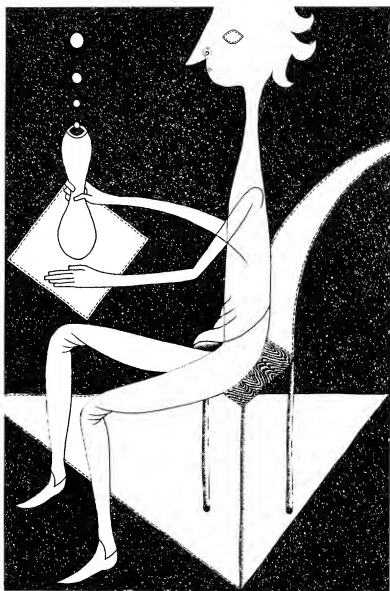
WITH NO OTHER CHOICE, I DECIDED TO JUST GRAB MY SHOES AND GO IN MY PAJAMAS, FETUS AND ALL.



I OPENED THE DOOR.

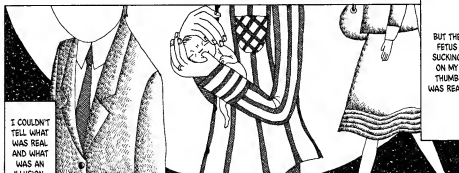


I WAS
GREETED
BY THE
SIGHT OF
THE TOWN,
LOOKING
TOTALLY
THE SAME
AS USUAL.





HAD WHAT
I WITNESSED
JUST BEEN
AN ILLUSION
OR MAYBE A
BAD DREAM?

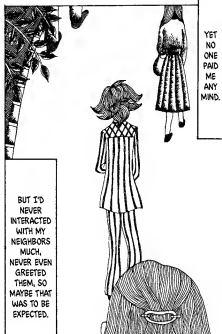


I COULDN'T
TELL WHAT
WAS REAL
AND WHAT
WAS AN
ILLUSION.

BUT THE
FETUS
SUCKING
ON MY
THUMB
WAS REAL.



I FELT
CONFUSED.



YET NO ONE PAID ME ANY MIND.

BUT I'D NEVER INTERACTED WITH MY NEIGHBORS MUCH, NEVER EVEN GREETED THEM, SO MAYBE THAT WAS TO BE EXPECTED.



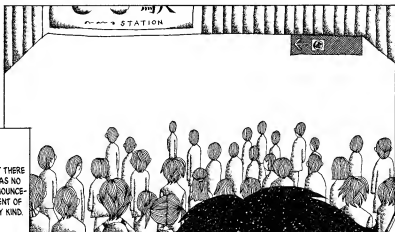
I WAS WEARING PAJAMAS WITH MY LEATHER BOOTS AND HOLDING A PREMATURE FETUS TO MY CHEST.



IT FELT SURREAL, BUT I HEADED ON THE USUAL PATH TO THE STATION.

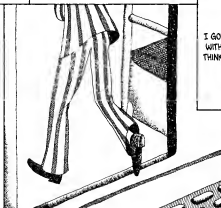
THE TOWN LOOKED LIKE IT ALWAYS DID IN THE MORNING, BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING NOT QUITE RIGHT. THE PEOPLE AND THE SCENERY SEEMED FLAT, LIKE SOME SORT OF PAPIER MACHE MOVIE SET. IF I WERE TO DESCRIBE IT IN A SINGLE WORD, THAT WORD WOULD BE "LIFELESS."

BUT THERE
WAS NO
ANNOUNCE-
MENT OF
ANY KIND.



THE STATION WAS
JAM PACKED.
APPARENTLY,
THE TRAIN HAD
BEEN STOPPED.
MAYBE SOMEONE
HAD JUMPED IN
FRONT OF IT.
IT DEFINITELY
SEEMED LIKE
SOMETHING BAD
HAD HAPPENED.

I GOT ON
WITHOUT
THINKING.



A TRAIN
CAME
HEADING
IN THE
OPPOSITE
DIRECTION.



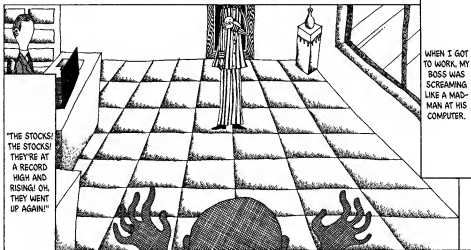
AN OLD
WOMAN
SAT ALONE,
SWAYING
WITH THE
MOTION OF
THE TRAIN.





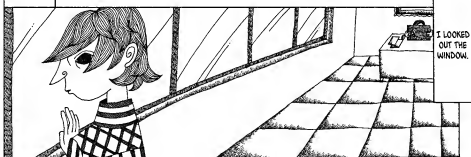
EVEN THOUGH
I'D GOTTEN
ON HEADING
THE WRONG
DIRECTION,
WITHIN A FEW
MINUTES, I'D
ARRIVED AT MY
WORKPLACE.

THERE WAS
SOMETHING
DEFINITELY
STRANGE.

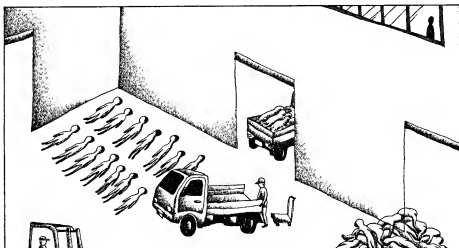


WHEN I GOT TO WORK, MY BOSS WAS SCREAMING LIKE A MAD-MAN AT HIS COMPUTER.

"THE STOCKS! THE STOCKS! THEY'RE AT A RECORD HIGH AND RISING! OH, THEY WENT UP AGAIN!"



I LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW.



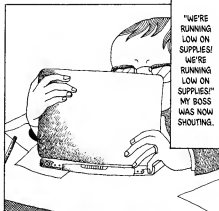


INSIDE
A GIANT
WAREHOUSE,
PILES OF
CORPSES
WERE BEING
DRIVEN IN
BY TRUCKS,
LINED UP
LIKE TUNA
AT A FISH
MARKET,
AND THEN
LOADED
BACK ON-
TO TRUCKS
AND DRIVEN
OUT AGAIN.

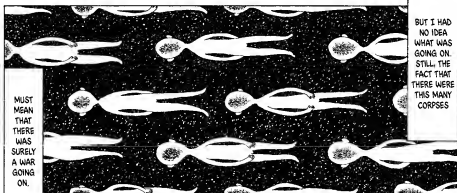
I FELT
LIKE
I WAS
WATCH-
ING A
FARMER'S
AUCTION.



HAD MY
WORKPLACE
ALWAYS
BEEN LIKE
THIS? MY
JOB WAS
DEFINITELY
WAREHOUSE
RELATED.

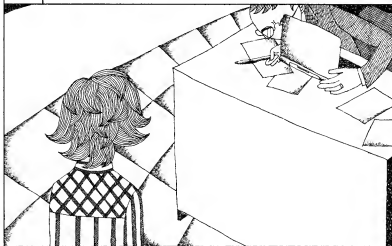


"WE'RE
RUNNING
LOW ON
SUPPLIES!
WE'RE
RUNNING
LOW ON
SUPPLIES!"
MY BOSS
WAS NOW
SHOUTING.



MUST
MEAN
THAT
THERE
WAS
SURELY
A WAR
GOING
ON.

BUT I HAD
NO IDEA
WHAT WAS
GOING ON.
STILL, THE
FACT THAT
THERE WERE
THIS MANY
CORPSES



MY BOSS
FINALLY
NOTICED ME.
"WHY ARE YOU
DRESSED LIKE
THAT? WHAT
KIND OF IDIOT
COMES TO
WORK IN HIS
PAJAMAS?
ANYWAY, JUST
GET TO WORK.
NO TIME FOR
LOLLYGAGGING.
PROFIT, IT'S ALL
ABOUT PROFIT."

"WHAT THE HELL IS THAT? WHAT IDIOT BRINGS A BABY TO WORK? YOU WANT THE DAY OFF? WELL, THIS COMPANY HAS NO USE FOR ANYONE WHO'D LET A CHANCE LIKE THIS GET AWAY, SO YOU'RE FIRED. NOW GET OUT OF HERE." AND WITH THAT, I FOUND MYSELF OUT OF A JOB.

"ABOUT THAT," I SAID, HOLDING OUT THE HAND THE FETUS WAS SUCKING ON. "AS YOU CAN SEE, I DON'T HAVE FULL USE OF MY HAND, AND BESIDES, I'M WORRIED ABOUT MY WIFE AND CHILD. CAN I HAVE THE DAY OFF?"

HAVING NO OTHER OPTIONS, I FIGURED I'D TURN AROUND AND HEAD HOME, BUT SUDDENLY, I WAS OVERCOME WITH FEAR THAT MY MISSING WIFE AND CHILD MIGHT BE SOMEWHERE IN THAT MASS OF CORPSES.



I SEARCHED FRANTICALLY, BUT THE BODIES ALL LOOKED THE SAME. MEN, WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND THE ELDERLY. I COULDN'T TELL ANYONE APART.

I RACED DOWN THE STAIRS TO THE WAREHOUSE AND BEGAN TO SEARCH AMONG THE CORPSES.

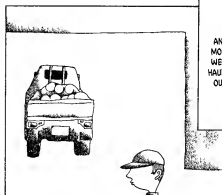
A MAN IN
MILITARY
UNIFORM
APPEARED
BEHIND A
PODIUM ON
THE STAGE
AND BEGAN
TO SPEAK.

IT WAS THE
COMPANY
PRESIDENT.

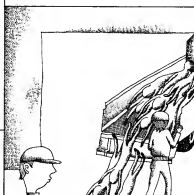
"THIS IS A VICTORY FOR CAPITALISM. GENTLEMEN, THIS IS A RESOUNDING VICTORY FOR CAPITALISM. SOCIALISM'S SELF-DESTRUCTION HAS HERALDED AN END TO THE AGE OF RELATIVE VICTORIES. LET US ALL REJOICE AS THE CURTAIN RISES ON AN AGE OF PURE CAPITALISM. PURE CAPITAL, PURE PROFIT, PURE TRADE. THIS IS THE EPITOME OF CAPITALISM. COMPLETE FREEDOM, COMPLETE EQUALITY IS NOW UNFOLDING BEFORE YOUR EYES. WE HAVE ATTAINED FREEDOM AND EQUALITY WITHOUT THE HELP OF MARXISTS. THE FREEDOM OF DEATH, THE EQUALITY OF DEATH. THIS IS THE NEW, PURE FORM OF CAPITALISM. WORK HARD. WORK HARD, FOR THE FUTURE RESTS ON YOUR SHOULDERS. WE MUST NOW JOIN HANDS TO BUILD OUR CAPITALIST UTOPIA."

THERE WAS
SCATTERED
APPLAUSE.

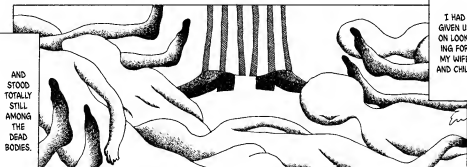
"YOU FUCKING
VULTURE."
AN INEX-
PRESSIBLE
REVULSION
WELLED UP
WITHIN ME.



AND
MORE
WERE
HAULED
OUT.



MORE
CORPSES
WERE
HAULED
INSIDE.



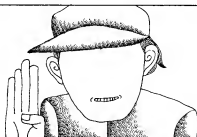
AND
STOOD
TOTALLY
STILL
AMONG
THE
DEAD
BODIES.

I HAD
GIVEN UP
ON LOOK-
ING FOR
MY WIFE
AND CHILD



"MORNIN'
THERE,"
CAME A
SUDDEN
VOICE.

WE'D BOTH
BEEN HIRED
AROUND THE
SAME TIME,
AND HE WAS
THE ONLY
REAL FRIEND
I HAD IN THE
COMPANY.



IT WAS MY
FRIEND.

"ANYWAY,
DON'T WORRY
ABOUT IT.
I DON'T WANT
TO WORK
HERE EITHER.
IF NOT FOR
MY FAMILY,
I WOULD'VE
QUIT A LONG
TIME AGO."



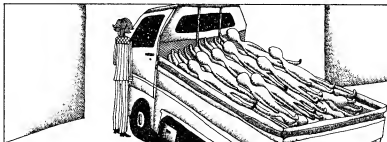
"I GOT
FIRED."
"WELL,
WITH THAT
OUTFIT,
I'M NOT
SURPRISED,"
HE SAID
WITH A
LAUGH.

"THAT'S AWFUL.
THIS IS NO
TIME TO BE
STANDING
AROUND THEN.
YOU'VE GOT
TO GO LOOK
FOR THEM.
I WAS JUST
ABOUT TO
LEAVE, SO
I'LL GIVE YOU
A RIDE TO
YOUR HOUSE."



"BUT THE
THING IS,
MY FAMILY,
MY WIFE AND
CHILD, HAVE
ALL GONE
MISSING."

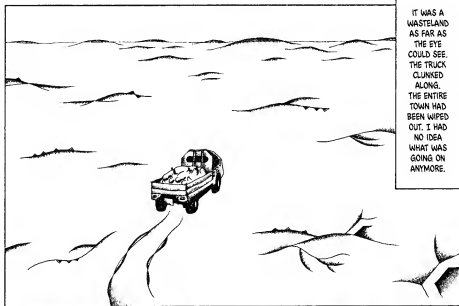
HE GAVE
ME A
RIDE IN
A TRUCK
PILED
HIGH WITH
CORPSES.



"OFF WE
GO."

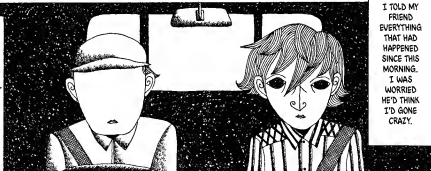
THE TRUCK
BEGAN
TO MOVE.





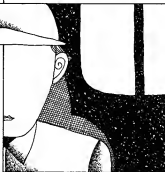
IT WAS A
WASTELAND
AS FAR AS
THE EYE
COULD SEE.
THE TRUCK
CLUNKED
ALONG.
THE ENTIRE
TOWN HAD
BEEN WIPED
OUT. I HAD
NO IDEA
WHAT WAS
GOING ON
ANYMORE.

HE LISTEN-
ED AND
NODDED
ALONG.



I TOLD MY
FRIEND
EVERYTHING
THAT HAD
HAPPENED
SINCE THIS
MORNING.
I WAS
WORRIED
HE'D THINK
I'D GONE
CRAZY.

TALKING
TO HIM
MADE
ME FEEL
BETTER.



"SO I HAVEN'T
GONE CRAZY?"
"WELL, I MEAN,
NOT UNLESS
I HAVE TOO."



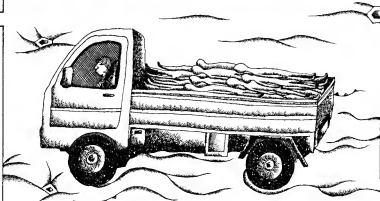
"ARE WE
AT WAR
THEN?"
"I GUESS
WE MUST
BE, HUH."

"I DON'T
KNOW,
BUT IT'S
SUCKING
ON MY
THUMB."
"WELL,
WITH THE
WAY THE
WORLD
IS THESE
DAYS, IT'S
FULL OF
THINGS
WE DON'T
UNDER-
STAND."



"WHAT'S
THAT?"
HE ASKED,
LOOKING
AT THE
FETUS THAT
I WAS
HOLDING.

"WHERE
ARE YOU
GOING?
WHERE
ARE YOU
TAKING
THESE
CORPSES?"



"I THOUGHT
MAYBE
YOU'D
KNOW
SOME-
THING."
"I DON'T
KNOW
ANY-
THING."

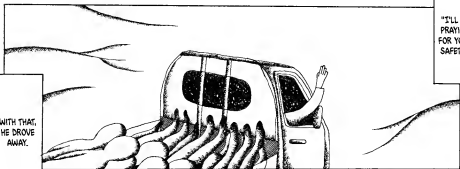
HE SAID
IN A
SING-
SONG
VOICE.



"I DON'T
KNOW.
I JUST
GO WITH
THE FLOW.
THAT'S
HOW IT
IS NOW."

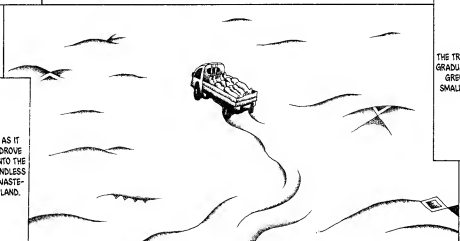


THE TRUCK
STOPPED.
WE WERE
RIGHT IN
FRONT OF
MY HOUSE.
THE ONLY
THING LEFT
STANDING
IN THIS
WASTELAND.



WITH THAT,
HE DROVE
AWAY.

"I'LL BE
PRAYING
FOR YOUR
SAFETY."

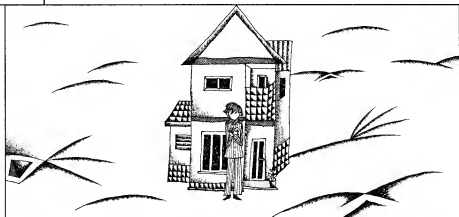


AS IT
DROVE
INTO THE
ENDLESS
WASTE-
LAND.

THE TRUCK
GRADUALLY
GREW
SMALLER

I HAD A
FEELING
THAT I'D
NEVER
SEE HIM
AGAIN.

I WATCHED
IT UNTIL
I COULD
SEE IT NO
LONGER.



AS IF
IN TIME
WITH
THE BEAT
OF MY
HEART.

THE FETUS
SUCKED
MY THUMB
RHYTH-
MICALLY,

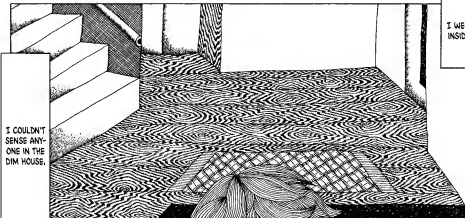
救済の



CH. 4

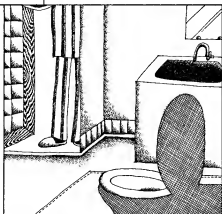
THE SEARCH FOR MY WIFE AND CHILD



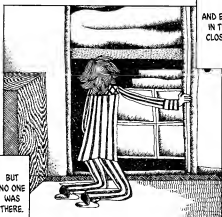


I COULDN'T
SENSE ANY-
ONE IN THE
DIM HOUSE.

I WENT
INSIDE.



BUT STILL,
I LOOKED
AROUND.

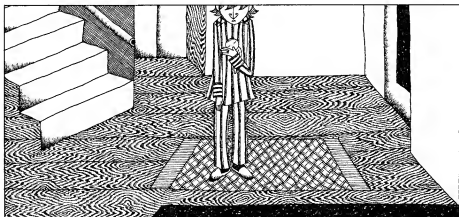
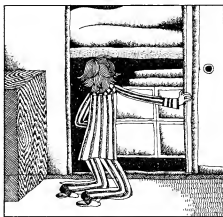
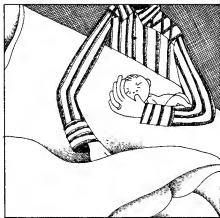
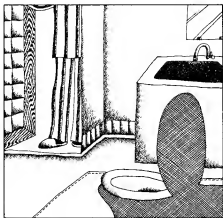


AND EVEN
IN THE
CLOSET.

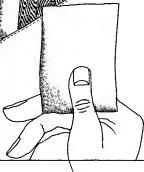
BUT
NO ONE
WAS
THERE.



I LOOKED
IN THE
BATHTUB.

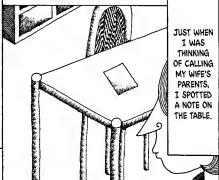


THIS
HADN'T
BEEN
THERE
IN THE
MORN-
ING.

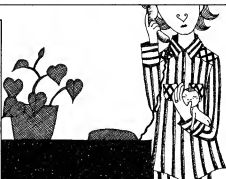


"I'M
GOING
TO VISIT
MY
PARENTS
FOR A
WHILE."

JUST WHEN
I WAS
THINKING
OF CALLING
MY WIFE'S
PARENTS,
I SPOTTED
A NOTE ON
THE TABLE.



HER MOTHER
ANSWERED.
"IS SHE THERE?"
"YES, SHE'S
HERE." SHE
SOUNDED ODDLY
STAND-OFFISH.



I THOUGHT
SUSPICIOUSLY,
AS I PICKED
UP THE PHONE.

"IN TIMES
LIKE THESE
I THINK
IT'S BEST
FOR FAMILY
TO BE
TOGETHER.
I'M COMING
OVER,"
I SAID AND
HUNG UP.



"WOULD
IT BE
OKAY IF
I CAME
OVER
NOW?"
"YOU CAN
IF YOU
WANT,
BUT I'M
NOT SURE
WHAT MY
DAUGHTER
WILL SAY."



"HOW ARE
THINGS
THERE?"
"SAME AS
USUAL."

I WAS
RELIEVED.

"IS SHE
ALL
RIGHT?"
"YES,
SHE'S
FINE."



I OPENED
THE DOOR,
AND IT WAS
STILL THE
WASTELAND.

IT'S ONLY
ABOUT
TWO OR
THREE
KILOMETERS
TO MY
IN-LAWS'
HOUSE,
BUT I HAD
NO IDEA
HOW TO
GET THERE
LIKE THIS.

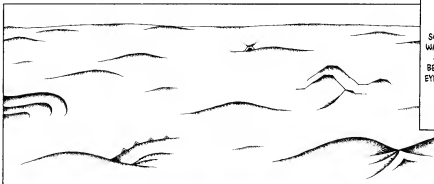
AFTER A
MINUTE,
I OPENED
THE DOOR
AGAIN.

I WENT
BACK
INSIDE
AND
CLOSED
MY EYES
TIGHTLY.

WHEN
I OPENED
THE DOOR,
IT WAS THE
TOWN AS
I KNEW IT.



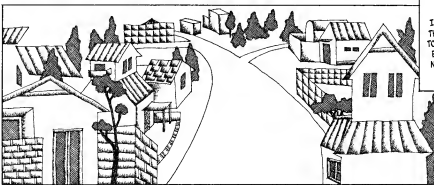
I BEGAN
WALKING
QUICKLY
TOWARDS
MY IN-
LAWS' HOUSE.



SOON, THE
WASTELAND
SPREAD
BEFORE MY
EYES AGAIN.



I CLOSED
MY EYES.



WHEN
I OPENED
THEM, THE
TOWN WAS
BACK TO
NORMAL.

IT WASN'T MY
HEAD OR MY
EYES THAT WERE
THE PROBLEM.
THE WORLD HAD
GONE CRAZY.



BUT
I KNEW
THAT
WASN'T
RIGHT.
EVERY-
THING
THAT
HAPPENED
THIS
MORNING
TO ME
WAS
REAL.
THE FETUS
SUCKING
ON MY
THUMB
WAS
PROOF.



I SUDDENLY
WONDERED
IF MAYBE
I WASN'T
GOING CRAZY,
IF MAYBE
THERE WAS
SOMETHING
WRONG WITH
MY EYES
INSTEAD.

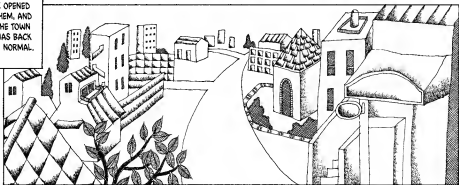
THE WASTE-
LAND AGAIN.

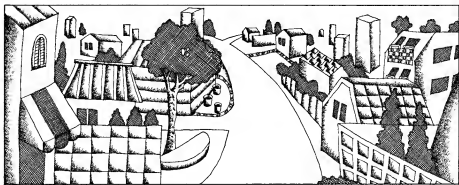


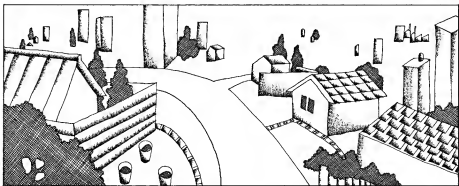
I CLOSED
MY EYES.



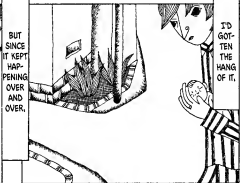
I OPENED
THEM, AND
THE TOWN
WAS BACK
TO NORMAL.







IT TOOK
ME
FOREVER
TO GET
TO MY
IN-LAWS'
HOUSE.



BUT
SINCE
IT KEPT
HAP-
PENING
OVER
AND
OVER,

I'D
GOT-
TEN
THE
HANG
OF IT,

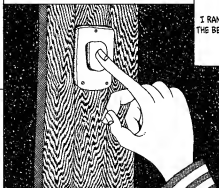


BY THE
TIME THAT
I FINALLY
ARRIVED,
THE SUN
HAD GONE
DOWN.



IT'D ONLY
BEEN A
MONTH OR
SO SINCE
I'D LAST
SEEN HER,
BUT SHE'D
REALLY
AGED.

AND MY
MOTHER-
IN-LAW
CAME TO
THE DOOR.



I RANG
THE BELL.



I ASKED
TO SEE HER
AGAIN AND
AGAIN, BUT
SHE JUST
KEPT ON
REPEATING,
"I'M SORRY,
I'M SORRY."

"MY
DAUGHTER
DOESN'T
WANT TO
SEE YOU.
PLEASE
GO AWAY.
I'M SORRY,"
SHE SAID,
SOUNDING
ODDLY
RESERVED.

MY MOTHER-IN-LAW
SOUNDED
SUDDENLY
ANGRY
AS SHE
POINTED TO
THE FETUS
I WAS
HOLDING.



"WHAT'S
THAT?"



"JUST LET ME SEE
HER. SHE'S GOT
THE WRONG IDEA
OR SOMETHING.
IN TIMES LIKE
THESE, WE SHOULD
BE TOGETHER AS
A FAMILY AND
SUPPORT EACH
OTHER. PLEASE,
I'M SURE THAT IF
I CAN JUST TALK
TO HER, SHE'LL
UNDERSTAND."

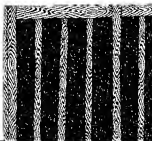
"ANYWAY,
I CAN'T
LET YOU
SEE HER.
PLEASE
GO HOME."



"DO YOU EVEN
KNOW WHAT
YOU'VE DONE?
MY DAUGHTER
IS ANGRY
ABOUT THAT,
ABOUT YOUR
INFIDELITY.
I KNOW THINGS
ARE HARD
FOR YOU NOW,
AND YOU'RE
PROBABLY
UNHAPPY WITH
MY DAUGHTER,
BUT THERE ARE
JUST SOME
THINGS YOU
SHOULDN'T DO."



SHE
SHUT
THE
DOOR
IN MY
FACE.





IN THAT
INSTANT,
A WASTE-
LAND LAY
BEFORE
MY EYES
ONCE MORE.

NOTHING
REMAINED
OF MY
IN-LAWS'
HOUSE.

NOW
I WAS
SURE
MY
WIFE
AND
CHILD
HAD
INDEED
DIED.

NO, THERE
WERE
TWO SMALL
GRAVE
MARKERS
WHERE
THEIR HOUSE
HAD BEEN.

STRANGELY
ENOUGH,
I WASN'T
EVEN SAD.

I FELL
TO MY
KNEES
BEFORE
THEM.

I WAS JUST
EXHAUSTED.

NOT
PHYSI-
CALLY,

AS IF
MY VERY
LIFE
FORCE
WERE
BEING
WORN
AWAY.

IT WAS A
FATIGUE
THAT WAS
BEYOND
WORDS.

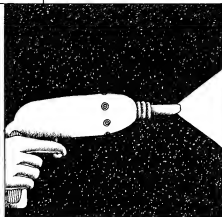


FROM
SOMEWHERE
IN THE
DISTANCE,
A CAR'S
HEADLIGHTS
RACED
TOWARDS
ME AT A
HIGH SPEED.

FOUR OR FIVE
SHADOWS
JUMPED OUT
FROM THE CAR
AND POINTED
GUNS AT ME.



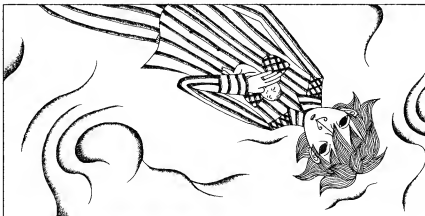
THE CAR
CAME
TO A
STOP
WITH A
SQUEAL
OF THE
BRAKES.



THEY WERE
RAY GUNS.

IN THAT
INSTANT,
SEVERAL
BEAMS
PIERCED
MY BODY.





I FELL
TO THE
GROUND.



"I'M GOING
TO DIE."
I THOUGHT.

I DIDN'T
HATE THE
IDEA, BUT
I WISHED
I AT LEAST
KNEW WHY.

I LOST CON-
SCIOUSNESS.

救済の



CH. 5

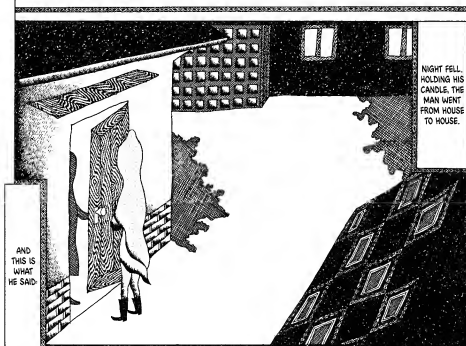
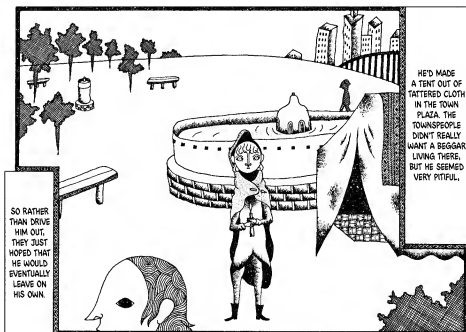
THE FLAME
OF PEACE





LONG AGO,
THERE WAS
A TOWN -
WELL, FROM
THE LOOK
OF THE
TOWN AND
PEOPLE'S
CLOTHES,
MAYBE IT
WASN'T
THAT LONG
AGO, AND
MAYBE IT
WASN'T IN
A COUNTRY
THAT WAS
SO DISTANT.

WELL, ANYWAY,
ONCE UPON
A TIME, THERE
WAS A TOWN,
AND IN THAT
TOWN, THERE
WAS A MAN.
FROM THE LOOKS
OF HIS RAGGED
CLOTHES, HE WAS
A BEGGAR, AND
HE APPEARED TO
BE VERY HUNGRY.
THERE WAS A
SORT OF DARK
DESPAIR IN HIS
EYES, AND IN
HIS HAND, HE
HELD A SINGLE
FLICKERING
CANDLE.



IT IS MY MISSION
TO SPREAD THIS FLAME
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.
I HOPE THAT AFTER SEEING
THIS FLAME, IT WILL BE
YOUR CONSTANT PRAYER
THAT THERE WILL BE PEACE
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD
AND THAT THERE WILL BE
NO MORE WAR. PLEASE
LIGHT YOUR CANDLES WITH
THIS FLAME AND SPARE A
SMALL PIECE OF BREAD FOR
ME SO THAT EVERYONE MAY
ALWAYS LIVE IN HAPPINESS."



"THIS IS THE FLAME OF
PEACE. LONG AGO,
THERE WAS A TOWN
OF YELLOW-SKINNED
PEOPLE THAT WAS
INSTANTANEOUSLY
BURNT TO ASHES IN A
WAR. A GREAT MANY
PEOPLE DIED. HAVING
COME TO KNOW THE
HORRORS OF WAR,
PEOPLE LIT THIS CANDLE
WITH THE EMBERS LEFT
OF THE TOWN AND
CALLED IT THE FLAME
OF PEACE IN THE HOPE
THAT A WAR WOULD
NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN.

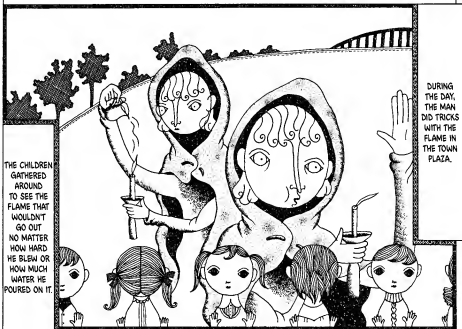


THE TOWNS-
PEOPLE
REFUSED
TO LISTEN
TO HIM AND
DROVE HIM
OUT. THEY
ASSUMED IT
WAS A NEW
METHOD OF
BEGGING.





THERE WERE EVEN SOME WHO TRIED TO BLOW OUT THE FLAME. BUT CURIOUSLY, IT NEVER WENT OUT. NO MATTER HOW HARD THEY BLEW OR HOW MUCH WATER THEY POURED ON IT.



THE CHILDREN GATHERED AROUND TO SEE THE FLAME THAT WOULDN'T GO OUT NO MATTER HOW HARD HE BLEW OR HOW MUCH WATER HE POURED ON IT.

DURING THE DAY, THE MAN DID TRICKS WITH THE FLAME IN THE TOWN PLAZA.



THE MAN
DID ACRO-
BATICS
AND MAGIC
TRICKS
FOR THE
CHILDREN,
AND THE
CHILDREN
LOVED IT.



THEN HE SAID TO
THE CHILDREN THAT
WERE GATHERED
BEFORE HIM, "YOU
MUSTN'T HATE YOUR
FATHERS. HATRED
LEADS TO WAR. YOU
MUSTN'T SCORN YOUR
MOTHERS. SCORN
LEADS TO WAR. YOU
MUSTN'T BULLY YOUR
FRIENDS. BULLYING
LEADS TO WAR.
YOU MUSTN'T ENVY
THE RICH. ENVY
LEADS TO WAR.

LOOK AT THIS
FLAME. WHEN
YOU LOOK AT
THIS FLAME,
YOU WILL FEEL
A SENSE OF
PEACE AND
A DESIRE TO
AVOID STRIFE.
TELL YOUR
MOTHER AND
FATHER OF
THIS SO THAT
THERE MAY
BE PEACE IN
YOUR FUTURE."

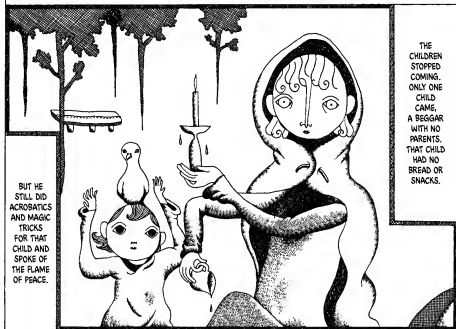
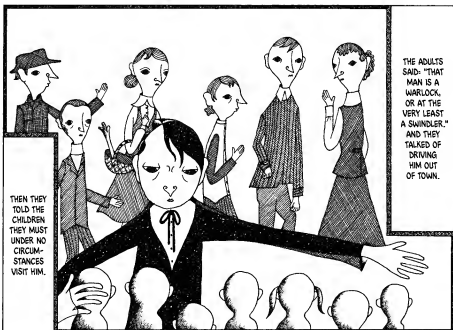


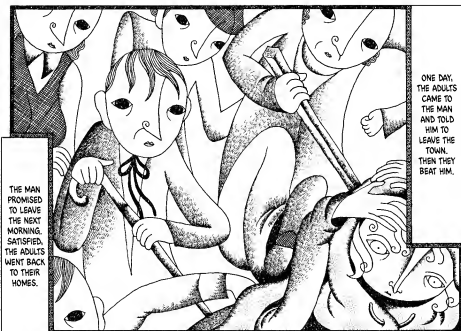
THE MAN
WAS HAPPY
AND DID
ACROBATICS
AND MAGIC
TRICKS
FOR THEM
AND TOLD
THEM OF
THE FLAME
OF PEACE.

THE CHILDREN
CAME TO LOVE
THE MAN, AND
THEY LISTENED
EARNESTLY TO
EVERYTHING
HE HAD TO SAY.
EVERY DAY,
THEY GATHERED
BEFORE HIM
WITH SNACKS
AND PIECES
OF BREAD.



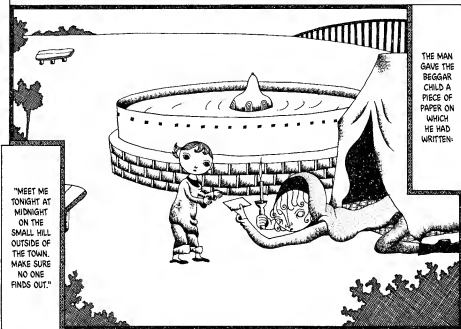
EVERY NIGHT,
HE TOOK THE
FLAME OF
PEACE AND
WENT FROM
HOUSE TO
HOUSE, BUT
AS EXPECTED,
THE ADULTS
REFUSED TO
LISTEN TO HIM.





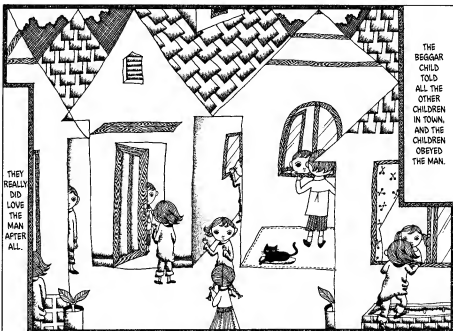
THE MAN
PROMISED
TO LEAVE
THE NEXT
MORNING.
SATISFIED,
THE ADULTS
WENT BACK
TO THEIR
HOMES.

ONE DAY,
THE ADULTS
CAME TO
THE MAN
AND TOLD
HIM TO
LEAVE THE
TOWN.
THEN THEY
BEAT HIM.



THE MAN
GAVE THE
BEGGAR
CHILD A
PIECE OF
PAPER ON
WHICH
HE HAD
WRITTEN:

"MEET ME
TONIGHT AT
MIDNIGHT
ON THE
SMALL HILL
OUTSIDE OF
THE TOWN.
MAKE SURE
NO ONE
FINDS OUT."



THEY
REALLY
DID
LOVE
THE
MAN
AFTER
ALL.

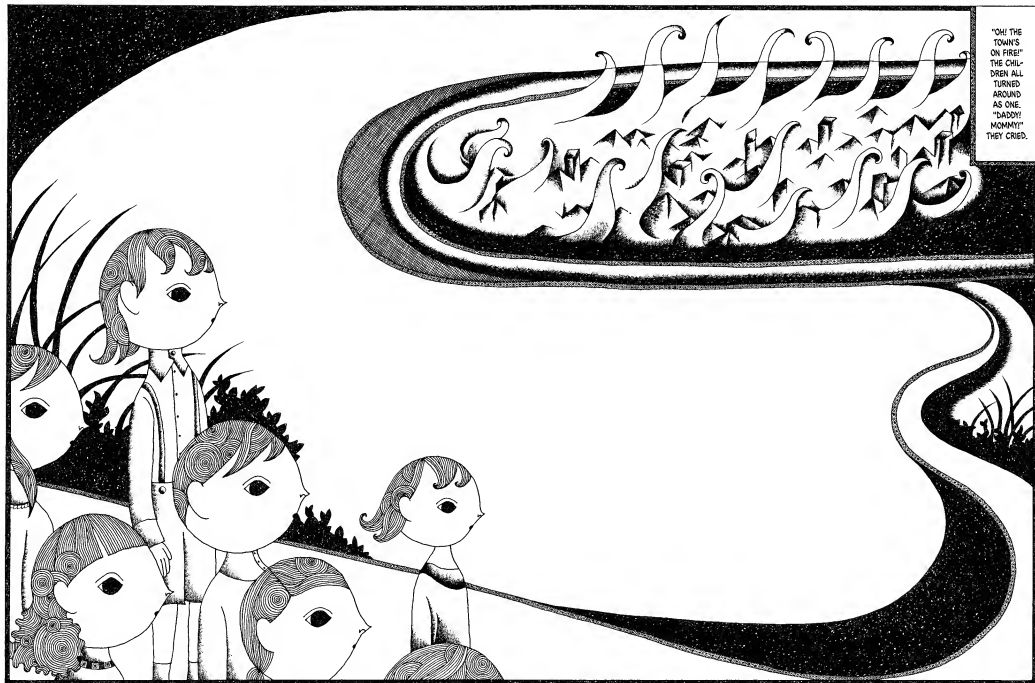
THE
BEGGAR
CHILD
TOLD
ALL
THE
OTHER
CHILDREN
IN TOWN,
AND THE
CHILDREN
OBEYED
THE MAN.



"FOLLOW
THIS ROAD.
I WILL JOIN
YOU SOON.
BUT YOU MUST
PROMISE
NEVER TO
LOOK BACK."
AND THEN,
THE MAN
RETURNED
TO TOWN.
THE CHILDREN
FOLLOWED
THE ROAD UP
THE HILL.

AT MIDNIGHT,
THE CHILDREN
GATHERED ON
THE SMALL
HILL OUTSIDE
OF THE TOWN.
THE MAN SAID
TO THEM:





"OH! THE
TOWN'S
ON FIRE!"
THE CHILDREN ALL
TURNED
AROUND
AS ONE.
"DADDY!
MOMMY!"
THEY CRIED.

THEN THE
MAN RAN
AFTER THE
CHILDREN.
WHEN HE
CAUGHT UP
WITH THEM,
HE FOUND
NOTHING
BUT SMALL
WHITE
PILLARS.



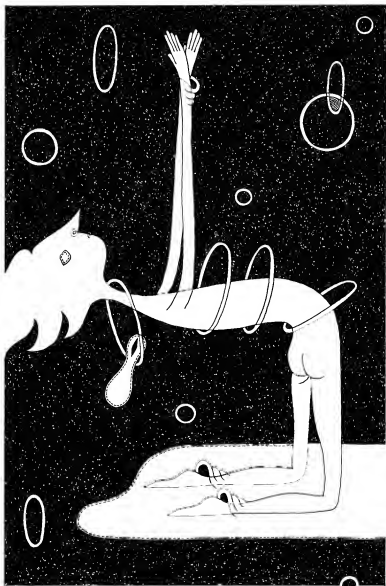
DOZENS
OF SMALL
WHITE
PILLARS
OF SALT.

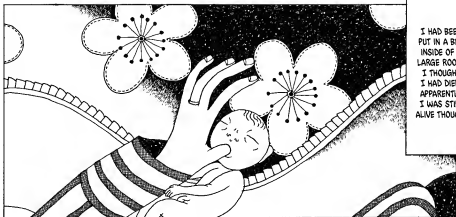
救済の



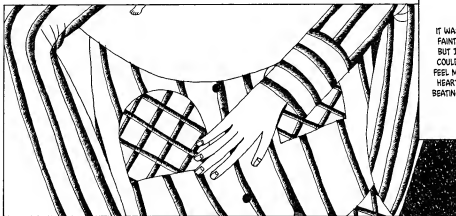
CH. 6

AT THE DETENTION CENTER
FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS





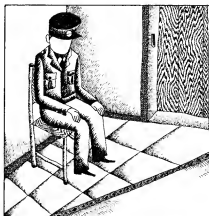
I HAD BEEN
PUT IN A BED
INSIDE OF A
LARGE ROOM.
I THOUGHT
I HAD DIED.
APPARENTLY,
I WAS STILL
ALIVE THOUGH.



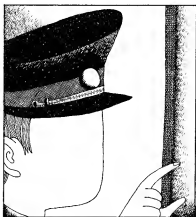
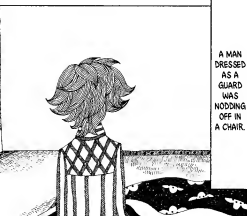
IT WAS
FAINT,
BUT I
COULD
FEEL MY
HEART
BEATING.



THE FETUS
APPEARED TO
BE UNHARMED,
AND IT WAS
STILL SUCKING
STRONGLY ON
MY THUMB.



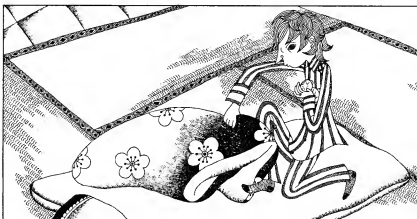
A MAN
DRESSED
AS A
GUARD
WAS
NODDING
OFF IN
A CHAIR.



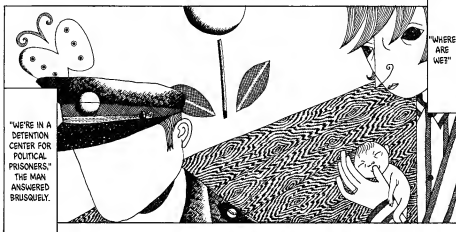
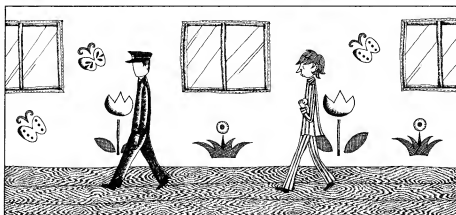
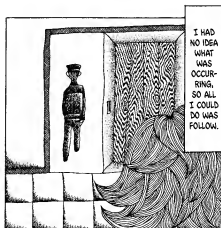
"OH,
YOU'RE
AWAKE.
FOLD UP
YOUR
FUTON."



"UM,
EXCUSE
ME,"
I SAID.



I DID SO
CLUMSILY
WITH ONE
HAND.



BUT I
FELT LIKE
I'D BEEN
ASLEEP
FOREVER.



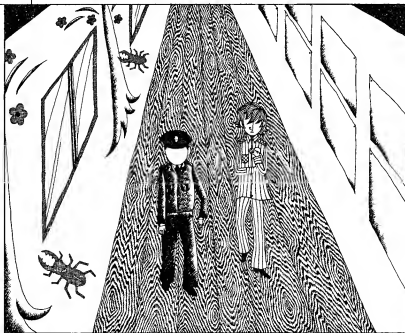
I DON'T
KNOW
WHY.



"WHAT
ARE YOU
TALKING
ABOUT?
YOU WERE
BROUGHT
IN LAST
NIGHT."



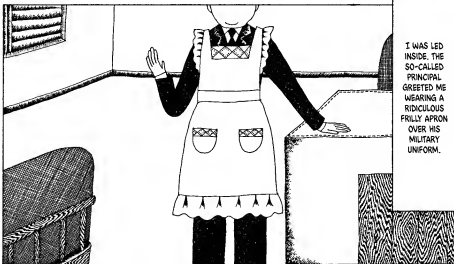
"UH, HOW
MANY
YEARS
HAVE
I BEEN
ASLEEP?"



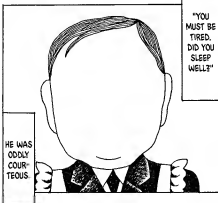
IT WAS A
STRANGE
BUILDING.
THOUGH
IT WAS A
DETENTION
CENTER FOR
POLITICAL
PRISONERS,
THE WALLS
WERE DECORATED
WITH
CHILDISH
DRAWINGS
OF FLOWERS.



THE ROOM
THAT I WAS
TAKEN TO
HAD A SIGN
SAYING
"PRINCIPAL'S
OFFICE"
INSTEAD OF
"WARDEN'S
OFFICE."



I WAS LED
INSIDE. THE
SO-CALLED
PRINCIPAL
GREETED ME
WEARING A
RIDICULOUS
FRILLY APRON
OVER HIS
MILITARY
UNIFORM.



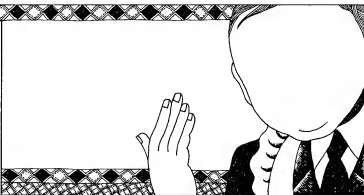
"YOU
MUST BE
TIRED.
DID YOU
SLEEP
WELL?"

HE WAS
ODDLY
COUR-
TEOUS.



"HAVE A
SEAT."
I SAT
DOWN
ON THE
SOFA.

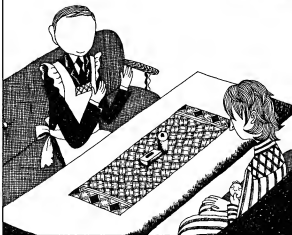
"I'M SURE THAT YOU'VE HEARD, BUT THIS IS A DETENTION CENTER FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS AND TERRORISTS. YOU'LL BE LIVING HERE FROM NOW ON, BUT DON'T WORRY. YOUR HUMAN RIGHTS IS OF OUR UT-MOST CONCERN."



"BUT I'VE NEVER HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH POLITICS. I HAVEN'T EVEN VOTED BEFORE."



"ANYWAY, NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT IT. I'LL GIVE YOU A TOUR. HOME IS WHERE YOU MAKE IT AFTER ALL. I'M SURE YOU'LL HAVE A GOOD TIME HERE."



"YOU'RE SPECIAL. IN YOUR CASE, IT'S MORE A MATTER OF PROTECTION."
"I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT."
"I DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND EITHER, BUT IT'S WHAT THE HIGHER-UPS WANT."
"HIGHER-UPS AS IN THE GOVERNMENT?"
"NO, PROBABLY HIGHER THAN THAT," HE PREVARICATED.



HE GAVE ME
A QUICK
TOUR OF THE
FACILITY.
OUR FIRST
STOP WAS
THE EXER-
CISE YARD.

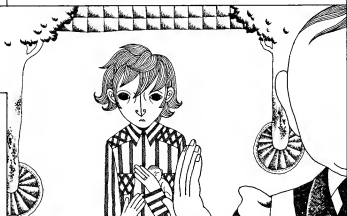
IT WAS
FENCED IN
BY HIGH
CONCRETE
WALLS.
AT FIRST
GLANCE,
IT LOOKED
LIKE A
KINDER-
GARTEN
PLAY-
GROUND.

SOME HAD FORMED A CIRCLE AND WERE PLAYING SOME SORT OF GAME.



GROWN MEN WITH BUZZCUTS WERE AMUSING THEMSELVES ON THE SWINGS AND SLIDE.

"NO
THANK
YOU."



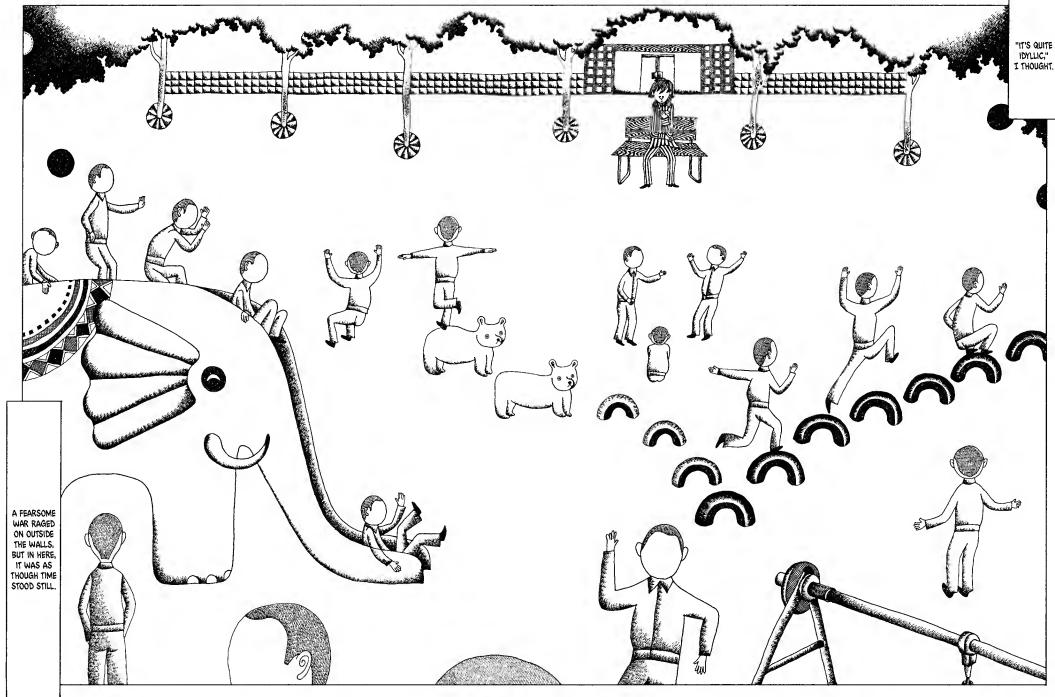
"IT'S PLAYTIME NOW. EVERYONE IS FREE TO PLAY HOWEVER THEY LIKE. THE AIM OF THIS FACILITY IS TO RETURN POLITICAL PRISONERS TO A CHILDLIKE STATE, RENDERING THEM HARMLESS. WHY DON'T YOU JOIN THEM?"

I SAT DOWN ON A BENCH AND WATCHED THEM ABSENT-MINDEDLY.



"SUIT YOURSELF," THE PRINCIPAL SAID AS HE LEFT.





"IT'S QUITE
IDYLIC,"
I THOUGHT.

A FEARSOME
WAR RAGED
ON OUTSIDE
THE WALLS.
BUT IN HERE,
IT WAS AS
THOUGH TIME
STOOD STILL.

"DINNER
TIME!"

I DON'T KNOW
HOW MANY
HOURS PASSED
LIKE THAT.
THE SUN WAS
STARTING TO
GO DOWN. A
GUARD IN AN
APRON BLEW
A WHISTLE.
THE POLITICAL
PRISONERS
ALL LINED UP
IN TWO ROWS.

THEY FELL
IN BEHIND
THE GUARD
AS HE LED
THEM TO THE
DINING HALL.

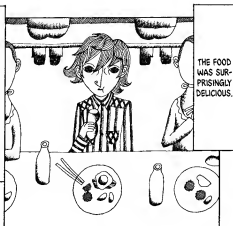
I FOLLOWED
ALONG
UNSTEADILY
AT A SLIGHT
DISTANCE.

"THANK YOU,
FATHER.
THANK YOU,
MOTHER.
THANK YOU,
MEAT AND
FISH AND
VEGGIES, FOR
THIS MEAL."

HOWEVER,
I WASN'T
HUNGRY.
I ONLY
ATE ABOUT
HALF OF IT.

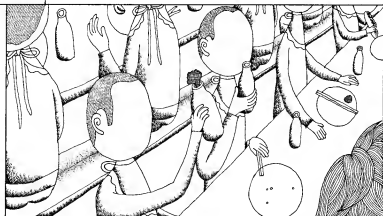


COME
TO THINK
OF IT,
I HADN'T
EATEN
ANYTHING
SINCE
YESTERDAY
MORNING.

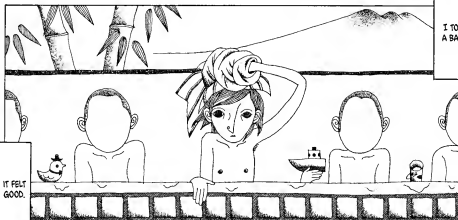


THE FOOD
WAS SUR-
PRISINGLY
DELICIOUS.

IF THEY WERE
ABLE TO PRO-
CURE THIS MANY
PROVISIONS IN
WARTIME, THE
ADMINISTRATION
MUST STILL BE
FUNCTIONING.



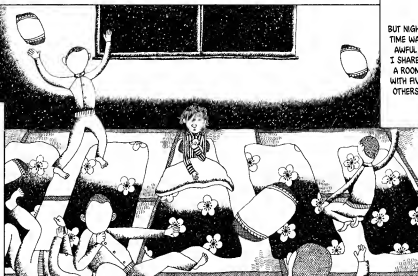
IT FELT
GOOD.



I TOOK
A BATH.

BUT NIGHT-TIME WAS AWFUL. I SHARED A ROOM WITH FIVE OTHERS.

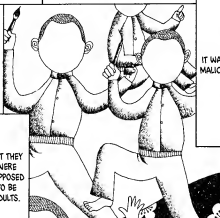
EVEN AFTER LIGHTS OUT, THE POLITICAL PRISONERS SHOWED NO INTEREST IN ANYTHING BUT PILLOW FIGHTS AND WRESTLING.



IT WASN'T MALICIOUS.

BUT THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO BE ADULTS.

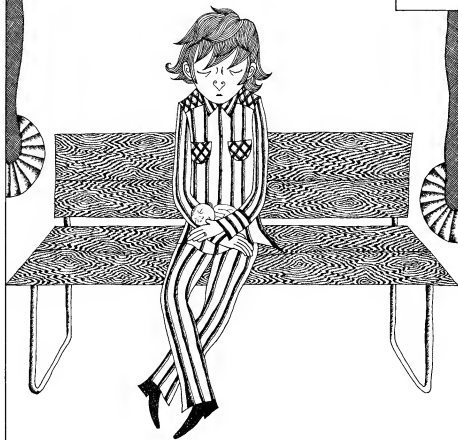
THEY SEEMED TO FIND ME UNUSUAL AND TEASED ME.



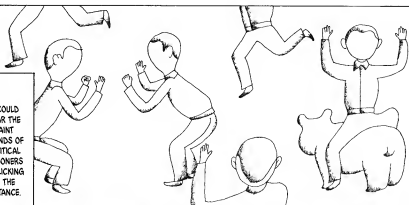
IT WAS DISCONCERTING.



THE DAYS
CONTINUED
LIKE THIS.
ASIDE FROM
BEING
TROUBLED BY
INSOMNIA,
I HAD NO
COMPLAINTS.
DURING THE
DAY, I SAT
ON A BENCH
AND DOZED.



I COULD
HEAR THE
FAINT
SOUNDS OF
POLITICAL
PRISONERS
FROlickING
IN THE
DISTANCE.



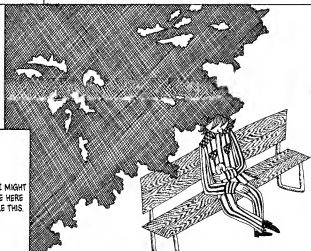
WHILE
I SAT
DOZING
ON THE
BENCH,

MY LIFE
WAS BEING
CONSUMED
BIT BY BIT.



THE FETUS
SUCKED AT
MY THUMB.
I REALIZED
HE WAS
SUCKING
THE LIFE
OUT OF ME
IN ORDER
TO LIVE.

IF I MIGHT
DIE HERE
LIKE THIS.



BATHING IN
THE GENTLE
SUNLIGHT,
I WONDERED

救済の日

CH. 7

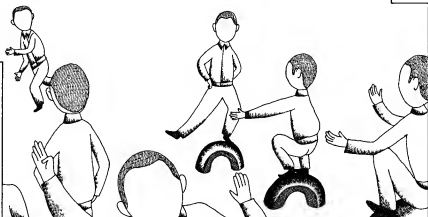
A CONVERSATION
WITH A COMMUNIST



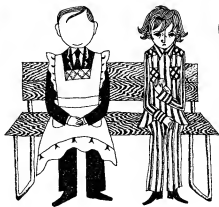
ONE DAY,
I WAS
SITTING ON
MY BENCH
AS USUAL



WHILE THE
POLITICAL
PRISONERS
FROLICKED.



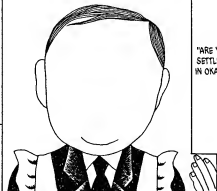
THE PRINCIPAL
CAME AND
SAT DOWN
NEXT TO ME.



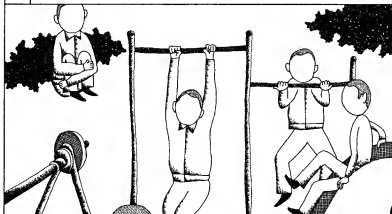
IT IS
NICE
HOW
CALM
IT IS.



"YES, I'M
MOSTLY
SATISFIED
WITH HOW
THINGS
ARE HERE.

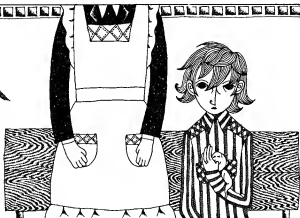


"ARE YOU
SETTLING
IN OKAY?"



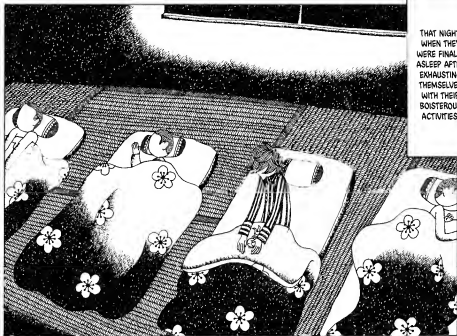
THERE'S JUST
ONE THING.
THOSE GUYS
ARE SO NOISY
AT NIGHT
THAT I CAN'T
SLEEP. I'VE
DEVELOPED
INSOMNIA.
I'D LIKE TO
BE MOVED
TO SOLITARY
CONFINEMENT
IF POSSIBLE."

HE
SAID,
AND
THEN
LEFT.



"I'M SORRY TO
SAY WE DON'T
HAVE SOLITARY
CONFINEMENT
HERE, BUT I
WILL SEE WHAT
CAN BE DONE
ABOUT YOUR
SLEEPLESSNESS.
NOW IF YOU'LL
EXCUSE ME,"

THAT NIGHT,
WHEN THEY
WERE FINALLY
ASLEEP AFTER
EXHAUSTING
THEMSELVES
WITH THEIR
BOISTEROUS
ACTIVITIES,

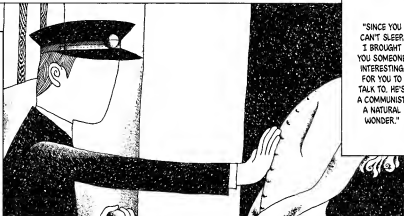


THE DOOR
OPENED,
AND THE
GUARD
BROUGHT
A MAN IN.

THE MAN HAD A
SHAGGY BEARD
AND LONG HAIR.
HE WAS NAKED
FROM THE WAIST
UP, COVERED IN
DUST AND GRIME,
AND HAD HIS
HANDS BOUND
BEHIND HIM.



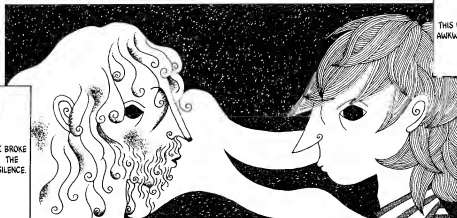
WITH THOSE
WORDS,
THE GUARD
THRUST THE
MAN INSIDE
AND LEFT.



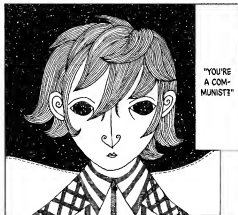
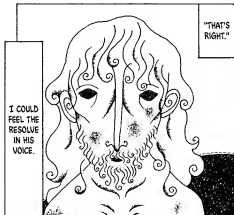
"SINCE YOU
CAN'T SLEEP,
I BROUGHT
YOU SOMEONE
INTERESTING
FOR YOU TO
TALK TO. HE'S
A COMMUNIST,
A NATURAL
WONDER."



I BROKE
THE
SILENCE.



THIS WAS
AWKWARD.

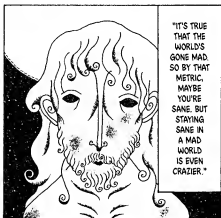




"ARE
YOU
MADE?"



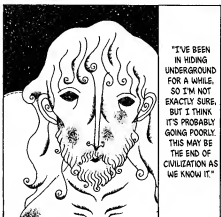
"YOU HAVE
A FACE.
YOU'RE
THE FIRST
PERSON
WITH A
FACE I'VE
SEEN SINCE
THIS WAR
STARTED."



"IT'S TRUE
THAT THE
WORLD'S
GONE MAD.
SO BY THAT
METRIC,
MAYBE
YOU'RE
SANE. BUT
STAYING
SANE IN
A MAD
WORLD
IS EVEN
CRAZIER."



"I DON'T
KNOW.
I DON'T
KNOW
IF I'VE
GONE
MAD
OR THE
WORLD'S
GONE
MAD OR
BOTH."



"I'VE BEEN
IN HIDING
UNDERGROUND
FOR A WHILE.
SO I'M NOT
EXACTLY SURE,
BUT I THINK
IT'S PROBABLY
GOING POORLY.
THIS MAY BE
THE END OF
CIVILIZATION AS
WE KNOW IT."



"HOW
GOES
THE
WAR?"



"WHAT IS YOUR THEORY THEN?"

"EVER SINCE THIS WAR BEGAN, I'VE BEEN THINKING VAGUELY THAT MAYBE MANKIND BECAME HUMAN BY EATING OTHER PEOPLE - THROUGH CANNIBALISM."

"YOU REALLY HAVE GONE MAD."

"WHEN STARVING, OMNIVOROUS APES WITH NO WEAPONS OR TOOLS FIRST STOOD ON THEIR OWN TWO FEET, NAKED IN THE SAVANNA, THE MOST EASILY OBTAINABLE HIGH QUALITY ANIMAL PROTEIN WAS THAT OF A HUMAN'S. HUMANS SPURRED ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR BRAINS BY EATING OTHER HUMANS. MAN GORGED ITSELF SLOVELY ON MAN, AND THAT'S WHERE THE FEAR OF HUMANS TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER WAS BORN, AS WELL AS THE SPECIAL SENSITIVITY WE FEEL ABOUT DEATH. BUT IF HUMANS KEPT EATING HUMANS, THEN EVENTUALLY, MANKIND WOULD BE DESTROYED. HUMANS ASSUMED THE MANTLE OF CIVILIZATION. THAT BEGAN WITH THE DECISION NOT TO EAT EACH OTHER. THEY DEVELOPED WEAPONS AND TOOLS, AND HONED THEIR SKILLS AS HUNTERS. ORDER AND RELIGION WERE CREATED FROM THAT AS WELL."

THAT IS THE SECRET OF MAN'S ADVANCEMENT."

"THAT IS CERTAINLY AN INTERESTING STORY, BUT IT'S NOTHING MORE THAN YOUR OWN DELUSIONS."

"HUMANS HAVE AN URGE TO MURDER, AND THEY HAVE A SECRET DESIRE TO BE THE LAST ONE STANDING AMONGST A CROWD. IT COMES FROM THAT PRIMITIVE FEELING OF SATIATION AND NOW TAKES ITS FORM AS A SENSE OF SATISFACTION. ONCE THE CONSTRUCTIONS OF ORDER AND CIVILIZATION ARE REMOVED, MAN SHOWS HIS TRUE SELF. WHEN YOU PEEL BACK THAT OUTER LAYER, HUMANS ARE NO MORE THAN WRETCHED BEASTS THAT GREEDILY DEVOUR THEIR OWN."

"YOU DESPAIR FOR MANKIND, AND THAT DESPAIR HAS LED YOU TO CONSTRUCT A SYSTEM OF BELIEF BASED ON WILD IDEAS."

"SO YOU STILL HAVE HOPE?"

"NO, MAYBE IT'S TRUE THAT I, TOO, MUST DESPAIR FOR MANKIND. HUMANITY WILL SOON CEASE TO EXIST. I AGREE WITH YOU THERE. MARX SAID THAT CAPITALISM PRODUCES ITS OWN GRAVEDIGGER. BUT IT SEEMS WHAT CAPITALISM HAS ACTUALLY PRODUCED IS HUMANITY'S GRAVEDIGGER."

"CAPITALISM IS CANNIBALISM IN ITS MOST SYMBOLIC AND COMPLETE FORM."

"ALL RIGHT, THAT'S ENOUGH. HOWEVER, I REFUSE TO GIVE UP HOPE. TOMORROW MORNING, I AM SET TO BE EXECUTED. BUT STILL, I WILL GO TO THE EXECUTION BLOCK WITHOUT ABANDONING IT. THAT IS HOW A COMMUNIST LIVES AND DIES. JUST WATCH," HE SAID WITH A LAUGH.

"WAS IT AMERICAZ?"

"AT FIRST."

"NUKES? DID THEY USE NUKES?"

"THEY DID, AND NOT ONLY THAT. THEY ALSO HAD STRANGE WEAPONS THE LIKES OF WHICH WE'D NEVER SEEN BEFORE. AND..."

"AND?"

"TEETH AND NAILS. THEY CLAWED WITH THEIR NAILS AND RIPPED WITH THEIR TEETH. A GREAT MANY PEOPLE DIED BY BEING CLAWED AND RIPPED APART. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING SO HORRIFIC. IT WAS LIKE HELL."

"SO IT WASN'T ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS THAT CAUSED IT THEN."

"MAN IS NOT SOME PEACEFUL BEAST TO WAIT PATIENTLY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT TO DESTROY US LITTLE BY LITTLE."

"I AGREE."

"BUT THERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT THIS WAR. I DON'T KNOW THE REASON OR THE PURPOSE. IT'S NOT LIKE ANYTHING HAPPENED TO THE COUNTRY. PEOPLE ARE JUST DYING. EVERYONE IS BOTH AGGRESSOR AND VICTIM. WE FOUGHT FOR PEACE BEFORE, BUT THIS TIME THERE IS NO ONE TO FIGHT. WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT WE SHOULD BE FIGHTING. I DON'T GET IT."

"OR MAYBE POLITICALLY-MINDED PEOPLE LIKE YOU ARE ALWAYS JUST LOOKING TO GIVE MEANING TO WAR, WHETHER IT'S TERRITORIAL OR RELIGIOUS, FOR SELF-DEFENSE OR REVENGE, OVER THE RIGHT TO OIL OR RIGHT TO WAR, OR FROM MY PERSPECTIVE,

EVEN AS BATTLES FOR REVOLUTION OR PEACE. WE MAY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GIVE ALL SORTS OF JUSTIFICATIONS FOR THEM UP TILL NOW, BUT THIS IS THE WAR TO END ALL WARS, THE APOCALYPSE. HUMANITY IS JUST SHOWING ITS TRUE FACE. KILL AND BE KILLED, THAT'S WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN."

"I DON'T THINK SO. IT'S TRUE THAT HISTORY IS A SUCCESSION OF FOOLISH WARS, BUT THERE HAS ALSO BEEN CULTURE, CIVILIZATION, AND ORDER. AND WE'VE FOSTERED THE IDEALS OF FREEDOM, EQUALITY, AND PEACE. I ACKNOWLEDGE MANKIND'S CRUELTY, BUT ISN'T THE PURSUIT OF THOSE IDEALS UNIQUE TO MAN? THAT'S WHAT WE HAVE BEEN FIGHTING FOR."

"THEN WHAT IS THIS WAR ABOUT?"

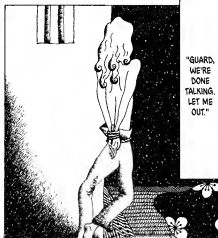
"I DON'T KNOW."

"I ONLY KNOW WHAT I'VE READ IN TEXTBOOKS, BUT YOU LOT THINK MANKIND BECAME HUMAN THROUGH LABOR. MAN'S ADVANCEMENT, SOCIETY'S DEVELOPMENT, AND EVEN YOUR IDEA OF A UTOPIA ALL SPRING FROM THAT ASSUMPTION. BUT I DON'T AGREE WITH THAT."

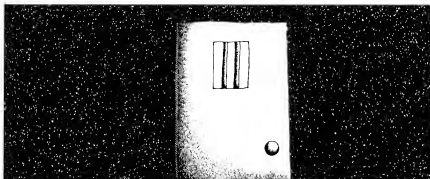




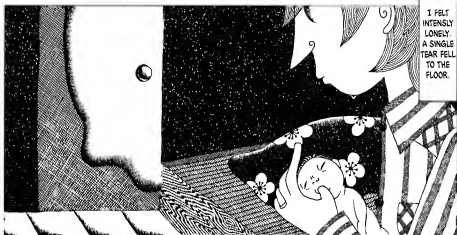




"GUARD,
WE'RE
DONE
TALKING.
LET ME
OUT."

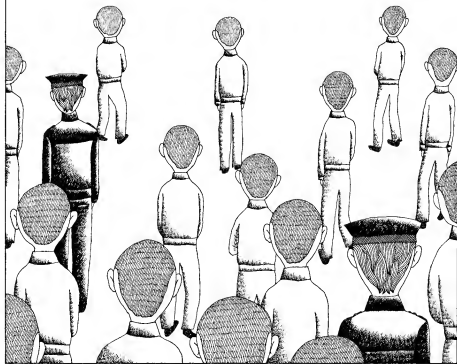
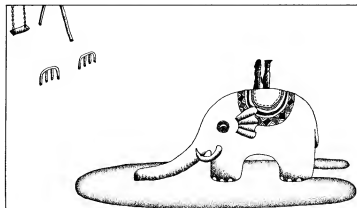


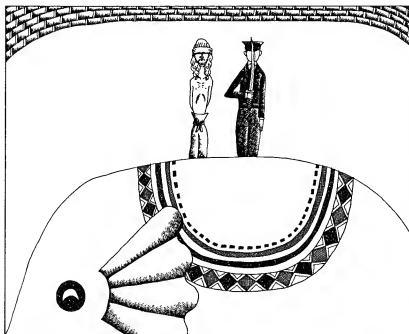
THE
MAN
LEFT.



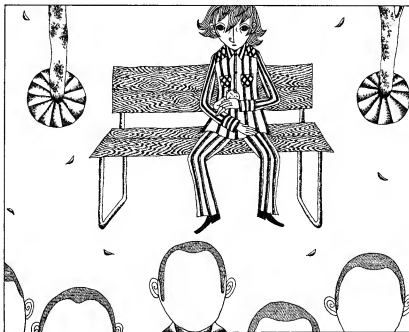
I FELT
INTENSELY
LONELY.
A SINGLE
TEAR FELL
TO THE
FLOOR.

THE NEXT
MORNING,
THE P.A.
SYSTEM
TOLD US
TO ALL
GATHER
TOGETHER
IN THE
REC YARD.

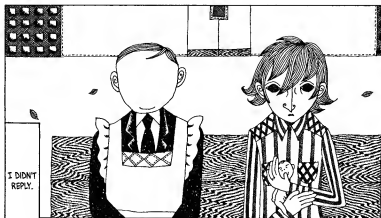




THE MAN
STOOD
BLIND-
FOLDED
ON TOP
OF THE
ELEPHANT
SLIDE. A GUARD
STOOD
NEXT TO
HIM WITH
AN UN-
SHEATHED
SWORD.

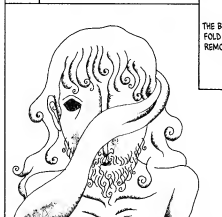


I SAT ON
MY USUAL
BENCH AND
WATCHED.

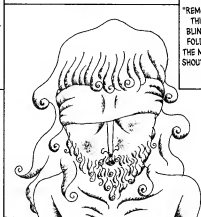


THE PRINCIPAL
SAT DOWN
BESIDE ME.
"IT'S A BIT OF
ENTERTAINMENT.
HOW BORING
OUR DAYS
WOULD BE IF
WE DIDN'T DO
SOMETHING
LIKE THIS ONCE
IN A WHILE."

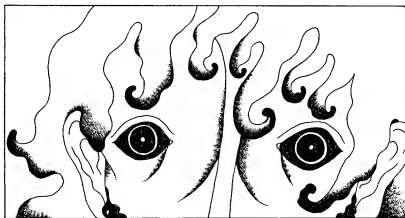
I DIDN'T
REPLY.



THE BLIND-
FOLD WAS
REMOVED.



"REMOVE
THIS
BLIND-
FOLD!"
THE MAN
SHOUTED.



HE OPENED
HIS EYES
AND GLARED
DOWN AT
THE CROWD.

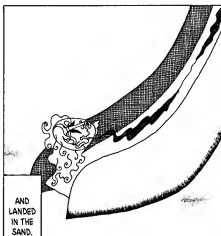
"GIVE US
JOHN'S
HEAD!
GIVE US
JOHN'S
HEAD!"

"GIVE US
JOHN'S
HEAD!"
CAME THE
CRY FROM
THE CROWD.

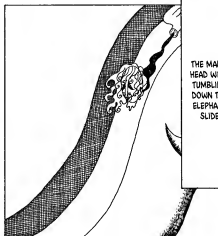
THE MAN
CROUCHED
DOWN
AND SAID,

"DO IT."

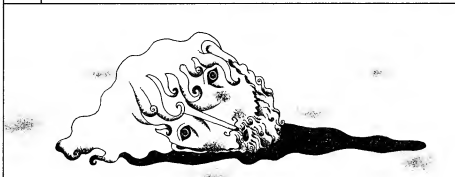
THE
SWORD
CAME
DOWN.



AND
LANDED
IN THE
SAND.



THE MAN'S
HEAD WENT
TUMBLING
DOWN THE
ELEPHANT
SLIDE



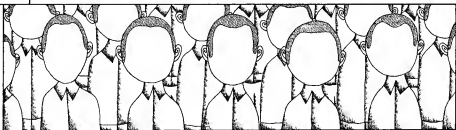
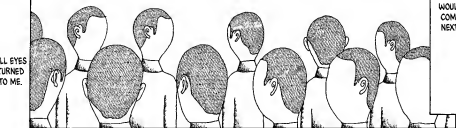
THE FEAR
WAS
PALPABLE.

THE CROWD
STOOD
TOTALLY
STILL IN
GHASTLY
SILENCE.



EVERY-
ONE
WAS
ANTI-
CIPATING
WHOSE
HEAD
WOULD
COME
NEXT.

ALL EYES
TURNED
TO ME.



I STOOD
ON TOP
OF THE
SLIDE.



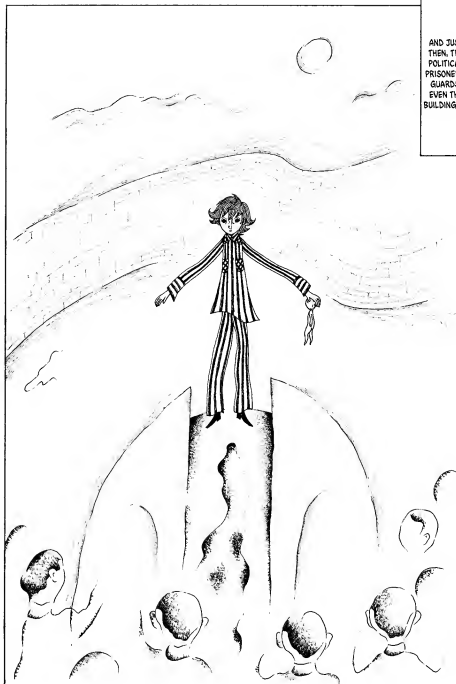
I STOOD
UP AND
WALKED
TOWARDS
THE ELE-
PHANT
SLIDE.

EVERYONE
STARRED UP
AT ME,

WAITING
FOR MY
WORDS.

"PERISH."

AND JUST
THEN, THE
POLITICAL
PRISONERS,
GUARDS,
EVEN THE
BUILDINGS...



...ALL
VANISHED
IN AN
INSTANT.





I WAS ALL
ALONE, FLAT
ON MY BACK
IN AN EMPTY
WASTELAND.

I COULD
HEAR THE
SIREN OF
AN AMBU-
LANCE.

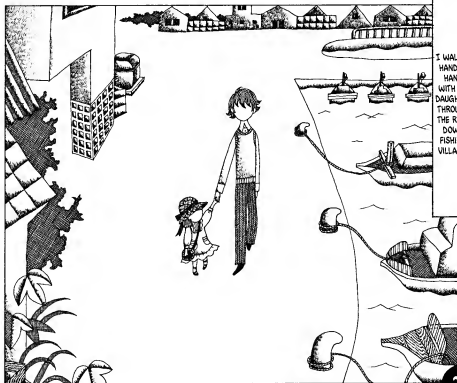
救済の日



CH. 8

THE CAT ZOO



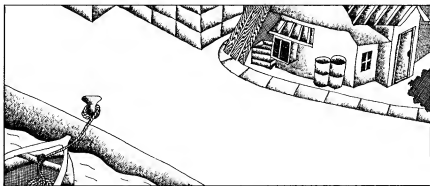


I WALKED
HAND IN
HAND
WITH MY
DAUGHTER
THROUGH
THE RUN-
DOWN
FISHING
VILLAGE.



THAT'S
RIGHT.
THIS WAS
THE SORT
OF LITTLE
GIRL I'D
ALWAYS
WANTED.
TODAY,
SHE HAD
DRAGGED
ME OUT
TO GO TO
THE ZOO.

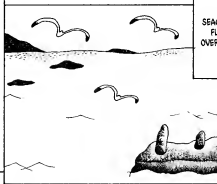
WEARING HER
FRILLY WHITE
DRESS AND
RED-RIBBONED
STRAW HAT,
SHE LOOKED
BOTH CUTE
AND ELEGANT,
LIKE A LITTLE
PRINCESS.



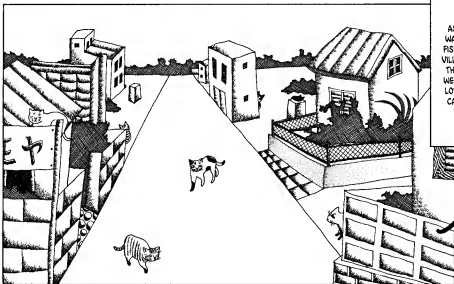
THE FISHING VILLAGE WAS COMPLETELY DESERTED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY.



CATS PROWLED AROUND EVERYWHERE.



SEAGULLS FLEW OVERHEAD.



AS IT WAS A FISHING VILLAGE, THERE WERE A LOT OF CATS.

FOLLOWING THE SIGN, WE CAME TO A BREAKWATER FILLED WITH ABANDONED BOATS AND ANOTHER SIGN THAT READ "ENTRANCE TO THE ZOO."

動物園入り口

THERE'S A SIGN THOUGH. THERE MUST BE ONE HERE.

動物園
200M
←

WAS THERE REALLY A ZOO IN SUCH A DESERTED PLACE?

AT A GLANCE, IT SEEMED WE WERE MEANT TO CROSS THE METER-LONG PLANKS LAID ACROSS THE MANY BOATS.

動物園入り口

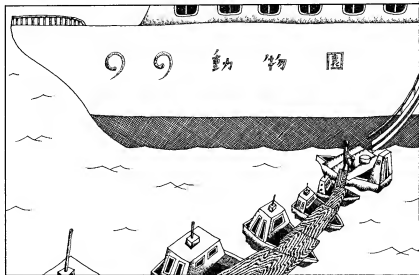
THERE WAS NO OTHER CHOICE, SO WE WALKED ACROSS THE PLANKS.



I WAS WORRIED SHE MIGHT FALL INTO THE WATER.



I MADE MY WAY CAREFULLY, HOLDING ON TO MY DAUGHTER'S HAND BEHIND ME.



WE FINALLY REACHED OUR DESTINATION, AN ABANDONED FERRY.



IT MUST BE SOME FOOLISH ATTEMPT TO BOOST THE SMALL TOWN'S ECONOMY.

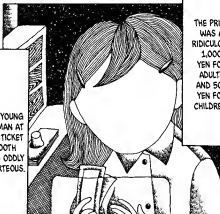
I'D NEVER HEARD OF A ZOO LIKE THIS, BUT THE WORD "ZOO" WAS PAINTED ON THE BOAT, SO IT MUST BE THE ZOO.

吉衣



I REGRETTED COMING, BUT SINCE WE WERE HERE, WE WENT UP THE STAIRS.

THE YOUNG WOMAN AT THE TICKET BOOTH WAS ODDLY COURTEOUS.



THE PRICE WAS A RIDICULOUS 1,000 YEN FOR ADULTS AND 500 YEN FOR CHILDREN.



I PAID AT THE WINDOW.

A DARK STAIRWAY WENT DOWNWARDS.



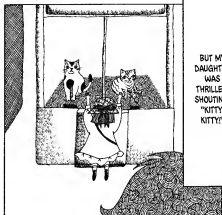
WE WENT INSIDE.





I WAS
SURPRISED.
THERE WERE
NO CAGES IN
SIGHT, JUST
A BUNCH OF
BROKEN UFO
CATCHERS
FILLING THE
DINING HALL.
AND EACH ONE
WAS FILLED
WITH NOTHING
BUT CAT AFTER
CAT AFTER CAT.

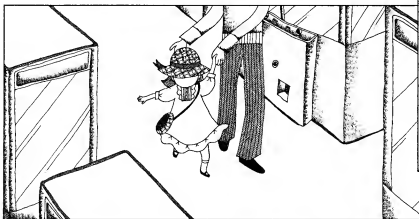
AND NOT
UNUSUAL
CATS EITHER.
JUST THE
SAME ONES
THAT WE'D
SEEN BY THE
HARBOR.



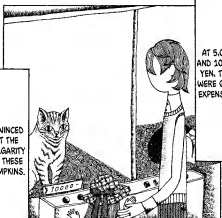
BUT MY
DAUGHTER
WAS
THRILLED,
SHOUTING,
"KITTY!
KITTY!"



I WAS ABOUT
READY TO GO
BACK AND
COMPLAIN,



WELL, IF
SHE WAS
HAPPY,
THAT WAS
THAT.
I WALKED
AROUND
WITH HER.

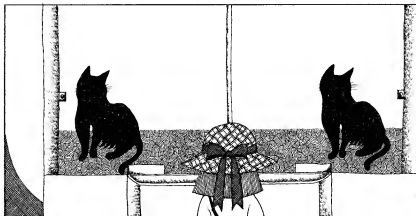


I WINCED
AT THE
VULGARITY
OF THESE
BUMPKINS.

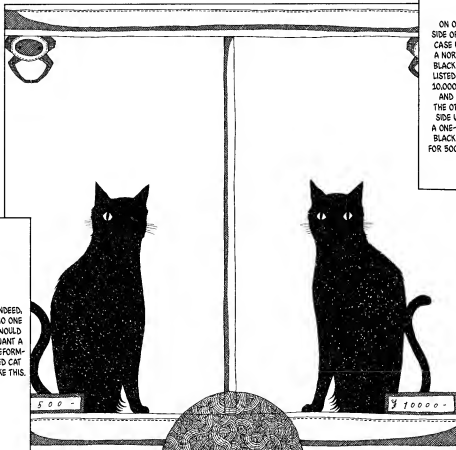
AT 5,000
AND 10,000
YEN, THEY
WERE QUITE
EXPENSIVE.



EACH
PERFECTLY
ORDINARY
CAT HAD A
PRICE TAG.



MY DAUGHTER
STOPPED IN
FRONT OF A
CASE WITH
A COUPLE OF
BLACK CATS.



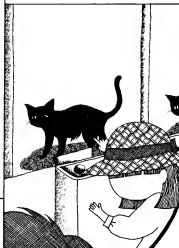
ON ONE
SIDE OF THE
CASE WAS
A NORMAL
BLACK CAT
LISTED FOR
10,000 YEN
AND ON
THE OTHER
SIDE WAS
A ONE-EYED
BLACK CAT
FOR 500 YEN.

INDEED,
NO ONE
WOULD
WANT A
DEFORM-
ED CAT
LIKE THIS.

I TRIED
TO DIS-
SUADE HER,
BUT SHE
REFUSED
TO BUDGE.



"THE CATS
HERE ARE
PROBABLY
SICK. WE'LL
GET YOU A
NICER KITTY
ONCE WE GET
BACK HOME."



I DON'T
KNOW WHAT
CAME OVER
HER, BUT MY
DAUGHTER
SUDDENLY
SAID SHE
WANTED THE
ONE-EYED
BLACK CAT.

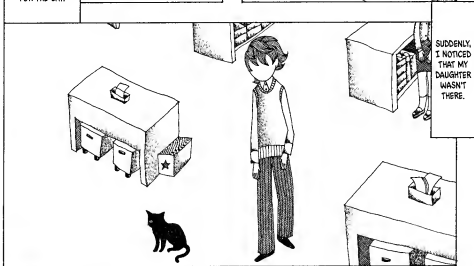
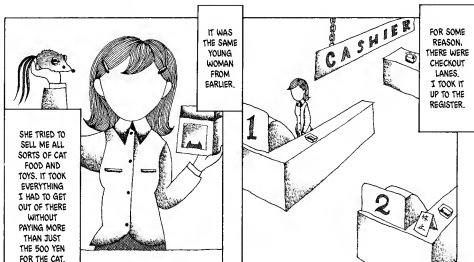
FINALLY,
SHE
BURST
OUT
CRYING.



KNOWING
MY WIFE
WOULD
SCOLD ME
WHEN WE
GOT HOME,
I TOOK THE
CAT FROM
THE CASE.
IT WASN'T
EVEN
LOCKED.



WHAT
FATHER
COULD
SAY NO
TO HIS
DAUGHTER
WHEN
SHE WAS
IN THIS
STATE?





THE YOUNG
WOMAN
HELPED
ME LOOK.



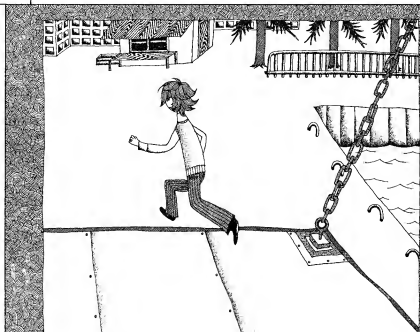
BUT WE
COULDN'T
FIND HER.



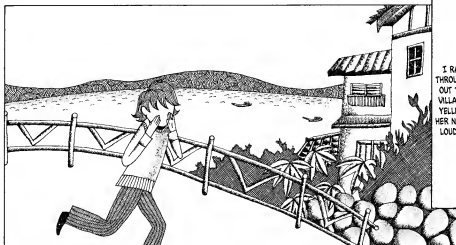
SHE
WASN'T
ANY-
WHERE
INSIDE.



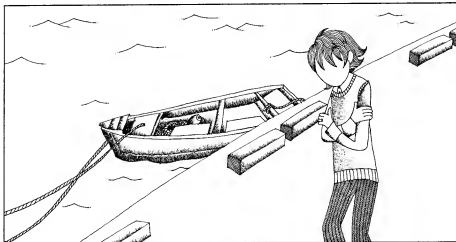
I LOOKED
FRAN-
TICALLY
FOR HER.



I RAN
OUTSIDE.



I RAN
THROUGH-
OUT THE
VILLAGE,
YELLING
HER NAME
LOUDLY.

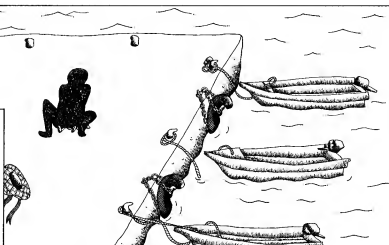


I WAS
AGITATED.

I WAS
OVERCOME
WITH AN
UNSPEAK-
ABLE FEAR.

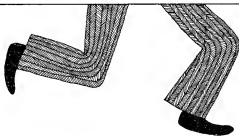


IT LOOKED
LIKE HE
HAD HIS
HANDS
WRAPPED
AROUND
HER NECK.



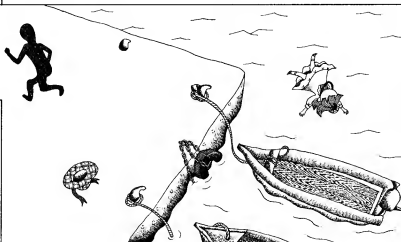
NEAR THE
WHARF,
I SPOTTED
THE DARK
SHADOW
OF A MAN.
ON CLOSER
INSPECTION,
I COULD
SEE HE WAS
CROUCHED
ABOVE MY
DAUGHTER.

I SHOUTED
AND RAN
AT HIM.



"HEY, WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING/?"

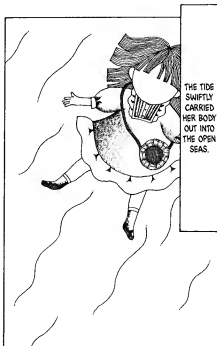
THEN RAN
OFF IN
THE OTHER
DIRECTION.



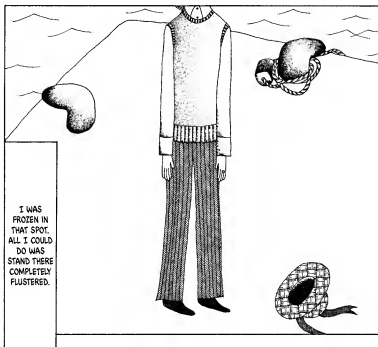
THE MAN SAW
ME COMING
AND TOSSED
MY DAUGHTER
INTO THE SEA.



THE
MAN
RAN
AWAY.

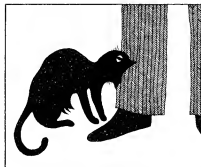


THE TIDE
SWIFTLY
CARRIED
HER BODY
OUT INTO
THE OPEN
SEAS.



I WAS
FROZEN IN
THAT SPOT.
ALL I COULD
DO WAS
STAND THERE
COMPLETELY
FLUSTERED.

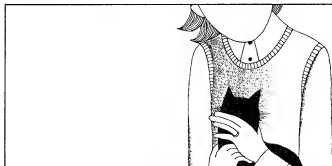
WHEN I GOT TO
THE WHARF,
I STOPPED STILL.
I DIDN'T KNOW
WHAT TO DO.
SHOULD I DIVE
INTO THE SEA
AFTER MY BY-
NOW-ALMOST-
CERTAINLY-DEAD
DAUGHTER OR
SHOULD I RUN
AFTER THE BLACK
SHADOW OF
THE CRIMINAL?



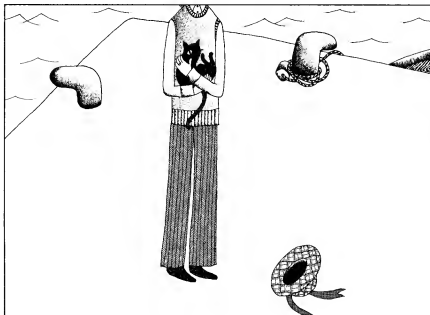
I LOOKED
DOWN TO
FIND THE
BLACK CAT
RUBBING
AGAINST
MY PANTS.



I NOTICED
SOME-
THING
BUMP
AGAINST
MY LEG.



I PICKED
IT UP.



CLUTCHING
THE ONE-
EYED CAT,
I STOOD
THERE IN
SILENCE.





EVERYTHING
YOU SEE NOW,
INCLUDING
MYSELF AND
THIS HOSPITAL,
IS ALL INSIDE
YOUR HEAD."

"SO LET ME GET
THIS STRAIGHT.
MANKIND WAS
OBLITERATED BY
A WORLD WAR,
AND YOU'RE THE
ONLY SURVIVOR.



AND YOU'RE
A LITTLE
DEHYDRATED,
SO WE'LL
GET YOU ON
AN IV WHILE
WE'RE AT IT."

"TEXTBOOK
PARANOIA.
WELL, THERE
ARE NO DRUGS
WE CAN GIVE
YOU FOR THAT,
SO WE'LL JUST
HAVE TO KEEP
YOU HERE UNDER
OBSERVATION
FOR A WHILE.



"THAT'S
RIGHT."



I FIGURED THAT
AN IV WOULD
BE USELESS,
SINCE IT WAS
MY LIFE BEING
SUCKED AWAY,
NOT FLUIDS.

I THOUGHT
IT WAS
BEST YOU
DIDN'T SEE
HER JUST
YET, SO I
ASKED HER
TO LEAVE."



"DON'T WORRY
ABOUT THAT.
YOUR WIFE
HAS ALREADY
TAKEN CARE
OF ALL THAT."



"YOU WANT
TO HOSPITAL-
IZE ME, BUT
I DON'T HAVE
MONEY OR
INSURANCE."



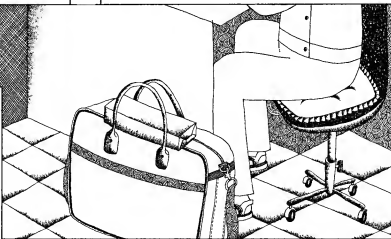
THE
DOCTOR
SAID
WITH A
SMIRK.

"RIGHT, OF
COURSE."



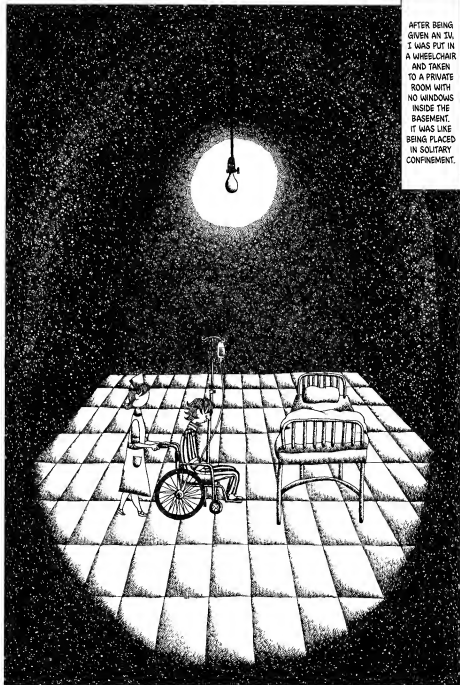
"MY WIFE
IS DEAD."

"I'LL JUST
TAKE THE
SMOKES."



"YOUR DEAD
WIFE BROUGHT
A PRESENT
FOR YOU."
A CARTON OF
CIGARETTES
SAT ATOP A
TRAVEL BAG.

AFTER BEING
GIVEN AN IV,
I WAS PUT IN
A WHEELCHAIR
AND TAKEN
TO A PRIVATE
ROOM WITH
NO WINDOWS
INSIDE THE
BASEMENT.
IT WAS LIKE
BEING PLACED
IN SOLITARY
CONFINEMENT.





"SORRY ABOUT THE ROOM, BUT FOR PATIENTS THAT HAPPEN TO BE IN YOUR CONDITION, IT'S BEST TO STAY OUT OF THE SUN AND AVOID OVER-STIMULATION."



"I REALLY SHOULDN'T BE GIVING YOU THESE."



THE NURSE GAVE ME A LIGHTER AND AN ASHTRAY.



SHE LOCKED THE DOOR FROM OUTSIDE AFTER SHE LEFT.



I INHALED DEEPLY.

IT TASTED GOOD.



I LIT A SMOKE.

I SOMEHOW
AT LEAST
MANAGED
TO NOT LOSE
MY SENSE
OF TIME.



THANKS
TO THE
REGULAR
IV DRIP
CHANGES.



THE HOSPITAL
FOOD THEY
PROVIDED AT
MEALTIMES
WASN'T ANY
GOOD, SO
I DIDN'T EAT.

THE
LONG
SLEEP-
LESS
NIGHTS
WERE
AGONY.

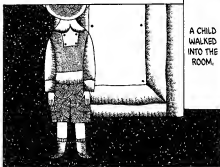


LITTLE BY
LITTLE,
I GREW
WEAKER.

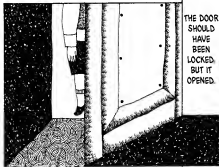




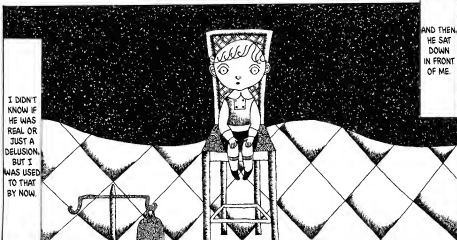
ONE NIGHT,
I SAT ON
MY BED
SMOKING A
CIGARETTE.



A CHILD
WALKED
INTO THE
ROOM.



THE DOOR
SHOULD
HAVE
BEEN
LOCKED,
BUT IT
OPENED.

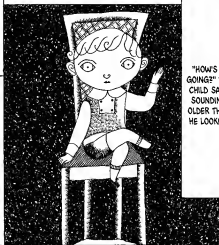


AND THEN,
HE SAT
DOWN
IN FRONT
OF ME.

I DIDN'T
KNOW IF
HE WAS
REAL OR
JUST A
DELUSION.
BUT I
WAS USED
TO THAT
BY NOW.



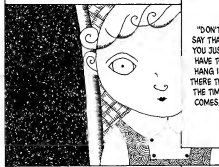
"TERRIBLE."



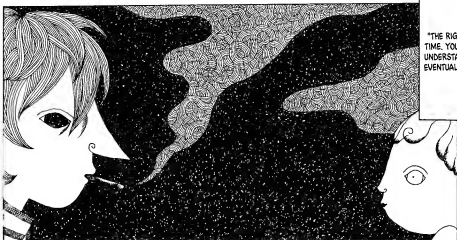
"HOW'S IT
GOING?" THE
CHILD SAID,
SOUNDING
OLDER THAN
HE LOOKED.



"WHAT
TIME?"



"DON'T
SAY THAT.
YOU JUST
HAVE TO
HANG IN
THERE TILL
THE TIME
COMES."



"THE RIGHT
TIME. YOU'LL
UNDERSTAND
EVENTUALLY."

"AN ANGEL.
IF YOU'RE
AN ANGEL,
THEN YOU
MUST KNOW.
PLEASE
TELL ME
WHAT ON
EARTH IS
GOING ON."

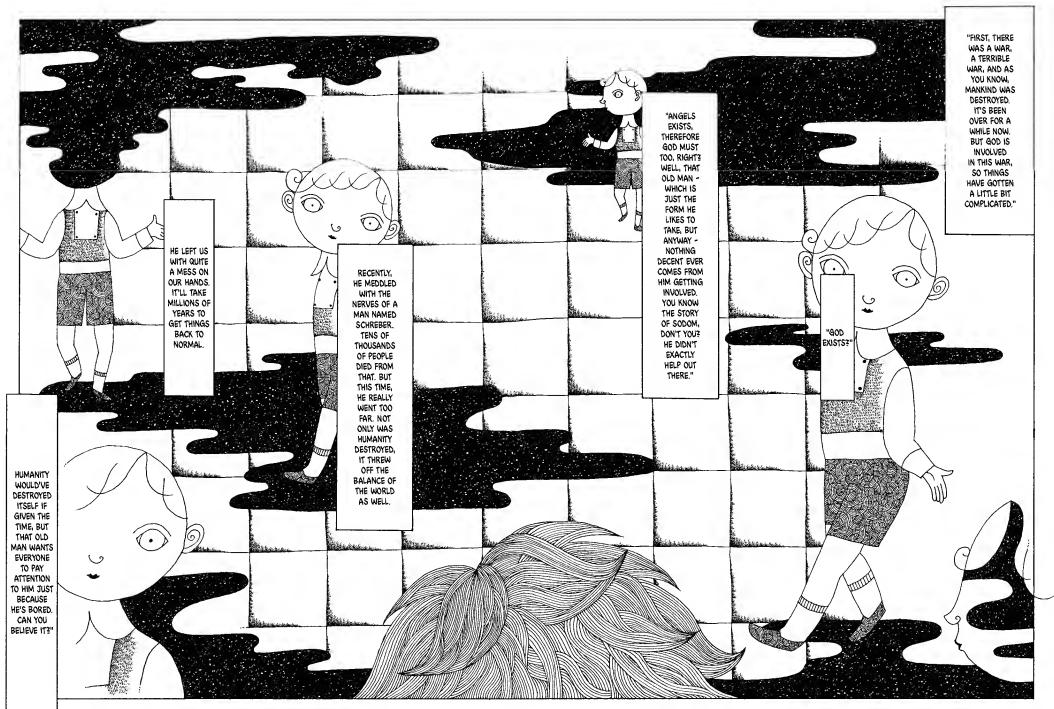


"AND WHO
THE HECK
ARE YOU
ANYWAY?
A FIGMENT
OF MY IM-
AGINATION?"
"HOW RUDE.
PEOPLE LONG
AGO ONCE
CALLED ME
AN ANGEL.
WELL, I'VE
ALSO BEEN
CALLED A
DEVIL TOO
THOUGH."

THE ANGEL
STOOD
UP AND
BEGAN
PACING
AROUND
THE BED.



"DON'T
BE SO
HASTY"



HUMANITY
WOULDN'T
DESTROYED
ITSELF IF
GIVEN THE
TIME, BUT
THAT OLD
MAN WANTS
EVERYONE
TO PAY
ATTENTION
TO HIM JUST
BECAUSE
HE'S BORED.
CAN YOU
BELIEVE IT?"

HE LEFT US
WITH QUITE
A MESS ON
OUR HANDS.
IT'LL TAKE
MILLIONS OF
YEARS TO
GET THINGS
BACK TO
NORMAL.

RECENTLY,
HE MEDDLED
WITH THE
NERVES OF A
MAN NAMED
SCHREBER.
TENS OF
THOUSANDS
OF PEOPLE
DIED FROM
THAT. BUT
THIS TIME,
HE REALLY
WENT TOO
FAR. NOT
ONLY WAS
HUMANITY
DESTROYED,
IT THREW
OFF THE
BALANCE OF
THE WORLD
AS WELL.

"ANGELS
EXISTS.
THEREFORE
GOD MUST
TOO, RIGHT?
WELL, THAT
OLD MAN -
WHICH IS
JUST THE
FORM HE
LIKES TO
TAKE, BUT
ANYWAY -
NOTHING
DECENT EVER
COMES FROM
HIM GETTING
INVOLVED.
YOU KNOW
THE STORY
OF SODOM.
DIDN'T YOU?
HE DIDN'T
EXACTLY
HELP OUT
THERE."

"GOD
EXISTS?"

"FIRST, THERE
WAS A WAR,
A TERRIBLE
WAR, AND AS
YOU KNOW,
MANKIND WAS
DESTROYED.
IT'S BEEN
OVER FOR A
WHILE NOW.
BUT GOD IS
INVOLVED
IN THIS WAR,
SO THINGS
HAVE GOTTEN
A LITTLE BIT
COMPLICATED."

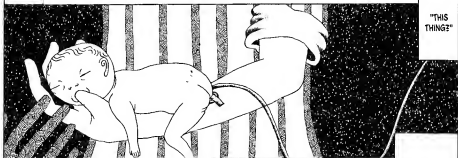


"HUMANITY WAS
DESTROYED.
I KNOW THAT
MUCH, BUT WHY
AM I THE ONLY
ONE STILL ALIVE
LIKE THIS?"



THE
ANGEL
JERKED
HIS CHIN
AT THE
FETUS.

"BECAUSE
OF THAT
LIL' GUY."



"THIS
THINGS?"



I HAD
NO IDEA
WHAT
HE WAS
TALKING
ABOUT.

"YES, YOU
PROTECTED IT,
AND SINCE
THE WORLD
NEEDS THAT
LITTLE GUY,
THE WORLD
PROTECTED
YOU. THAT'S
ALL IT IS."

"WHAT
THE HELL
IS THIS
THING?"

"YOU'LL
UNDERSTAND
WHEN THE
TIME COMES.
ANYWAY,
JUST WAIT.
I'LL COME FOR
YOU WHEN
THE TIME
IS RIGHT."

"HOW
LONG DO
I HAVE
TO WAIT?
I'LL DIE
BEFORE
THEN."

"YOU WON'T
DIE. IT'S
ALREADY
DECIDED."

"ALL
RIGHT,
SEE
YOU
THEN."

AND WITH
THAT, THE
ANGEL LEFT
MY ROOM.

WAITING
FOR THE
RIGHT
TIME.



THAT HAD
BECOME
MY ONLY
PURPOSE.





I GREW
WEAKER AND
WEAKER.
I ALMOST
NEVER LEFT
MY BED.



I MUST'VE
WAITED FOR
YEARS, BUT
THE ANGEL
NEVER CAME
BACK AGAIN.



THE ONE
THING THAT
I COULDN'T
GET USED
TO WAS THE
HUMILIATION
OF HAVING
MY DIAPERS
CHANGED.

I COULDN'T
SMOKE THEM
BY MYSELF
ANYMORE, SO
THE NURSE
HELPED ME.



MY WIFE
CONTINUED
TO SEND ME
CIGARETTES.

SHE SAID
AND POKED
THE TIP OF
MY NOSE.



"NO MORE
SILLY JOKES
NOW."



"YOU'RE
AN ANGEL,
AREN'T YOU?
WHEN WILL
YOU COME
FOR ME?"

"YOUR WIFE
BROUGHT
YOUR SON
WITH HER
TODAY.
HOW OLD
IS HE NOW?
I HAD TO
LAUGH AT
HOW MUCH
HE LOOKS
LIKE YOU."



"YOU NEVER
EAT, AND
YOU NEVER
SLEEP. IF
YOU KEEP
THIS UP,
YOU WON'T
EVER GET
TO SEE
YOUR WIFE
AND SON
AGAIN."



"HOW OLD
IS HE? I'VE
FORGOTTEN
ALREADY."

"I'D BEGIN
TO THINK IT
MIGHT NOT
BE SO BAD TO
JUST GROW
WEAKER AND
WEAKER TILL
I WAS DEAD."

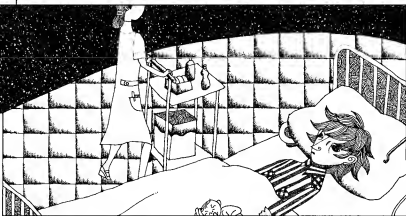


"MAYBE
THIS ISN'T
SUCH A
BAD LIFE,"
I THOUGHT.

SHE
WAS CUTE
WHEN
SHE WAS
ANGRY.

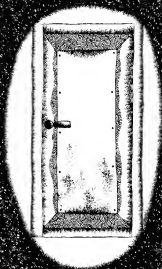


I WON'T
BE ABLE
TO DIE.



BUT IF
WHAT THE
ANGEL
SAID WAS
TRUE,

THE TIME
CAME
SUDDENLY.



IT WAS
THE
ANGEL.



THE
DOOR
FLEW
OPEN.

ONE DAY,
IN WHAT
WAS PROB-
ABLY THE
AFTERNOON,
I HEARD
SOMEONE
RUNNING
DOWN THE
CORRIDOR.



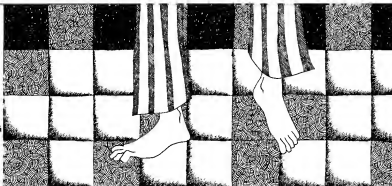
"THE TIME
HAS COME,
AND I AM
HERE FOR
YOU AS I
PROMISED.
HURRY UP
AND GET
READY."



"HOW?
I CAN'T
EVEN
STAND."



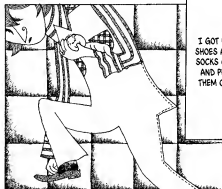
AT THE
ANGEL'S
WORDS,
I FOUND
I WAS
STANDING
DESPITE
MYSELF.



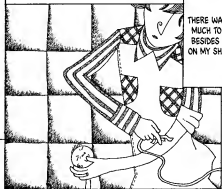
"YOU
CAN,
JUST
DO IT."



"HURRY."



I GOT MY
SHOES AND
SOCKS OUT
AND PUT
THEM ON.



THERE WASN'T
MUCH TO DO
BESIDES PUT
ON MY SHOES.



"FOLLOW
ME."

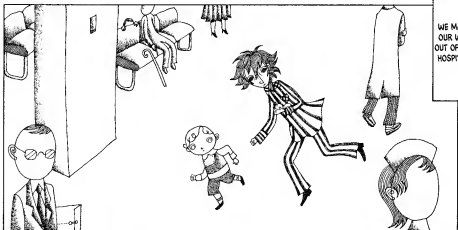
I FOLLOWED
HIM OUT OF
THE ROOM.



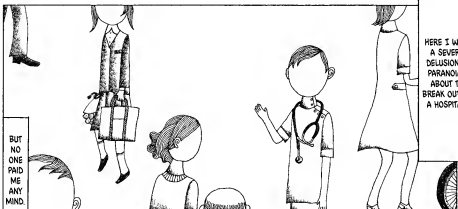
I WAS
PRETTY
FAST FOR
A GUY
WHO'D
BEEN
LYING IN
BED FOR
YEARS.



WE WENT
UP SOME
STAIRS.

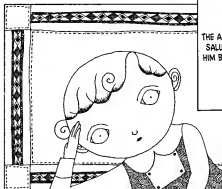
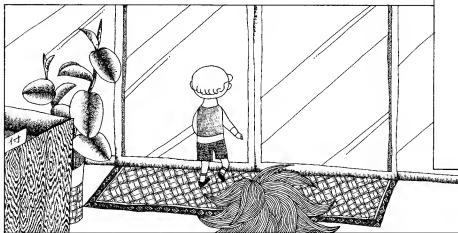


WE MADE
OUR WAY
OUT OF THE
HOSPITAL.



HERE I WAS,
A SEVERE
DELUSIONAL
PARANOID
ABOUT TO
BREAK OUT OF
A HOSPITAL.

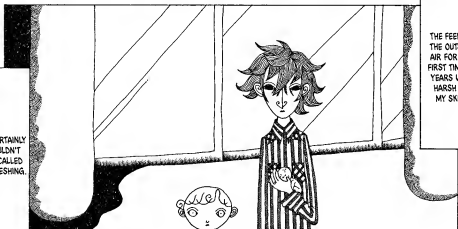
BUT
NO ONE
PAID
ME
ANY
MIND.



THE ANGEL
SALUTED
HIM BACK.



FOR SOME
REASON,
A GUARD
SALUTED
THE ANGEL.

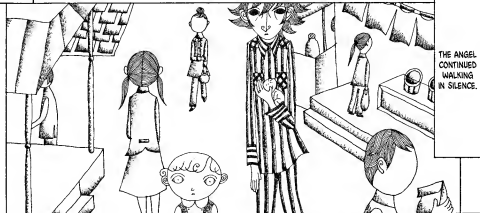
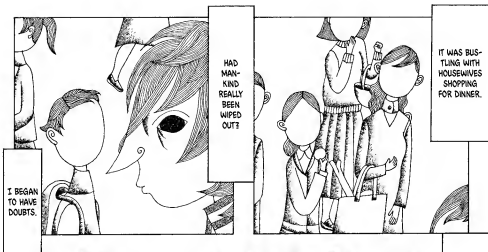


IT CERTAINLY
COULDN'T
BE CALLED
REFRESHING.

THE FEEL OF
THE OUTSIDE
AIR FOR THE
FIRST TIME IN
YEARS WAS
HARSH ON
MY SKIN.

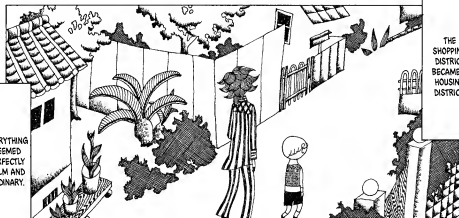
THERE WAS
A SMALL
SHOPPING
DISTRICT
NEXT TO THE
HOSPITAL.



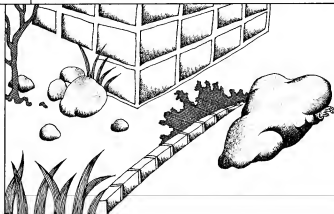


EVERYTHING
SEEMED
PERFECTLY
CALM AND
ORDINARY.

THE
SHOPPING
DISTRICT
BECAME A
HOUSING
DISTRICT.



SUDDENLY,
I NOTICED
AN OLD MAN
WRAPPED IN
AN OLD RAG
COLLAPSED
ON THE SIDE
OF THE ROAD.



KICKED
HIM, AND
SENT THE
OLD MAN
FLYING.

THE ANGEL
DASHED
FORWARD.



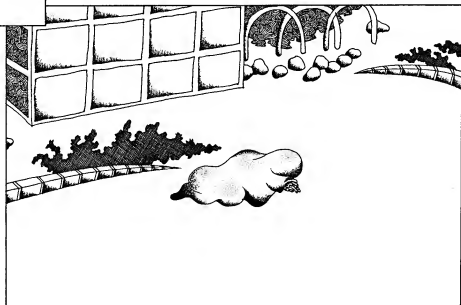
GO BACK
WHERE YOU
BELONG.
THE MERE
SIGHT OF
YOU PISSES
ME OFF."

"LURKING
ABOUT
AGAIN,
OLD MAN?"

"THAT'S
GOD."

THE ANGEL
SPIT THE
WORDS OUT.
A CHILL
RAN DOWN
MY SPINE.

"WHAT AN
AWFUL
THING TO
DO." I
THOUGHT.



WE
WALKED

AND
WALKED.

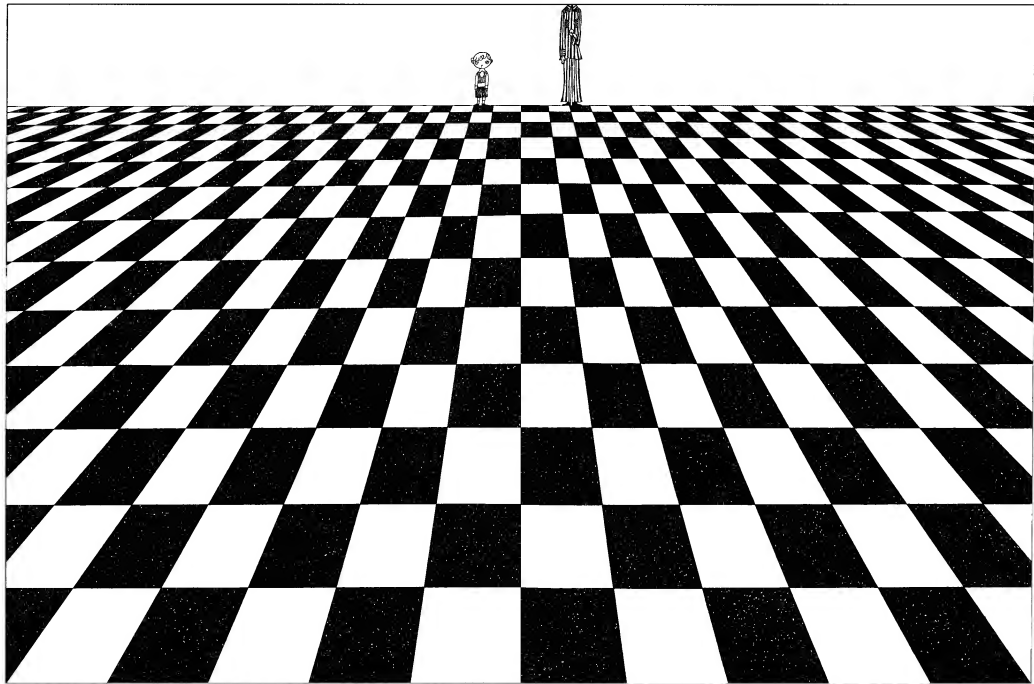
THE ANGEL
DIDN'T SAY
A WORD.

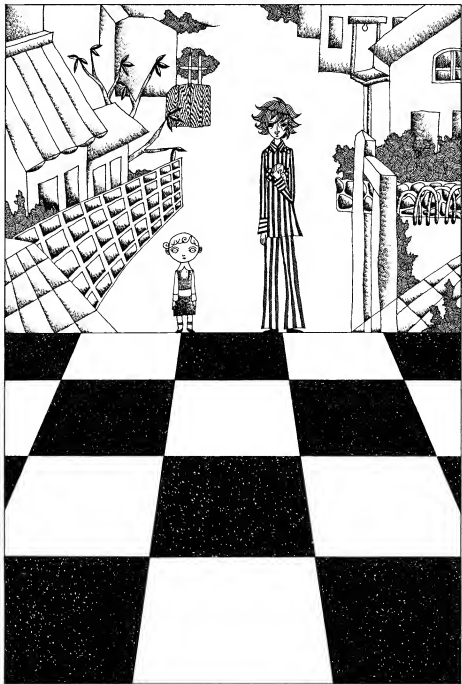
AND
I DIDN'T
ASK ANY
QUESTIONS.

IT HAPPENED
IN AN INSTANT.
THE SCENERY
BEFORE US
DISAPPEARED
AS IF IT HAD
BEEN SLICED
OUT WITH A
BOX CUTTER.

AN ENDLESS
WASTELAND
STRETCHED
BEFORE US.







WITH
THOSE
WORDS,
HE GAVE
ME A
PUSH.

"ALL RIGHT,
THIS IS AS
FAR AS
I CAN TAKE
YOU. YOU'LL
HAVE TO GO
THE REST
OF THE WAY
YOURSELF.
AND WHAT-
EVER YOU
DO, DON'T
LOOK BACK."

I TOOK
A STEP
INTO THE
WASTE-
LAND.

"FAREWELL,"
THE ANGEL
CALLED
AFTER ME.



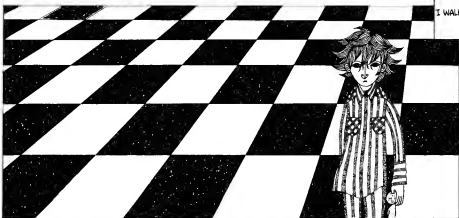
I WALKED
RESOLUTELY
THROUGH THE
WASTELAND.



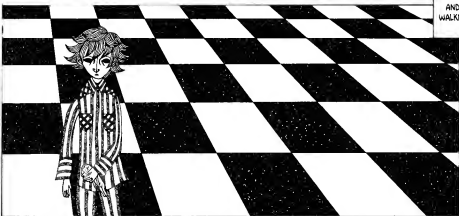
THE ANSWER
TO WHAT
"THE TIME"
WAS AWAITED
ME UP AHEAD.

IT WASN'T
HOPE THAT
KEPT MY LEGS
MOVING. BUT
SOMETHING
MORE LIKE
CERTAINTY.

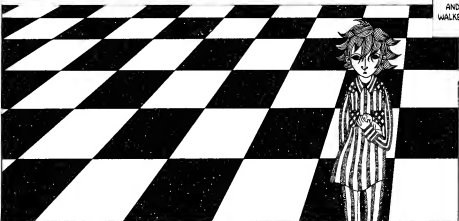
I WALKED

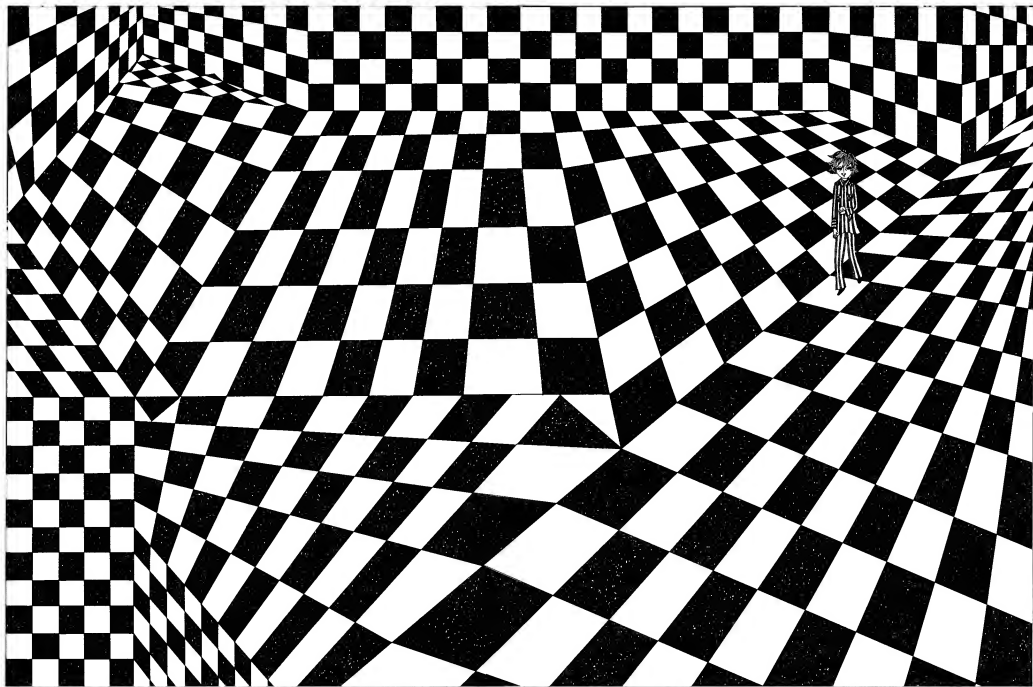


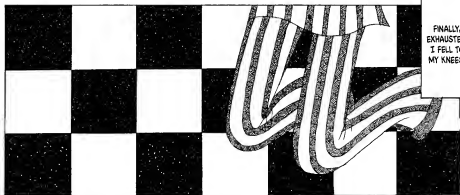
AND
WALKED



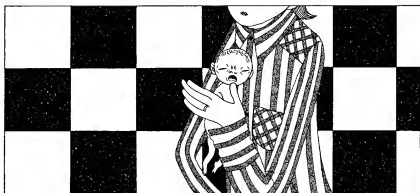
AND
WALKED.



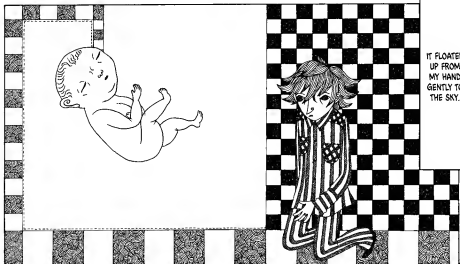




FINALLY,
EXHAUSTED,
I FELL TO
MY KNEES.



IN THAT
INSTANT,
THE FETUS
LET GO OF
MY THUMB.



IT FLOATED
UP FROM
MY HAND
GENTLY TO
THE SKY.

AND THEN,
IT WAS
COVERED IN
A BRIGHT
LIGHT THAT
DAZZLED
MY EYES.





"YOU HAVE
BEEN
SAVED."
THE WORDS
ECHOED
DIRECTLY
THROUGH
MY HEAD,
BYPASSING
MY EARS
ENTIRELY.

"YOU
HAVE
BEEN
SAVED."



"WHO
ARE
YOU?"

"WHO ARE
YOU?" I
SHOUTED.



"I AM
WHAT YOU
CALL THE
FUTURE."



"THE
FUTURE."

"I WILL
ALLOW
YOU TO
LIVE
IN THE
FUTURE.
YOU WILL
BE CUT
OFF FROM
THE PAST,
FROM
THE PAST
CALLED
THE
PRESENT,
AND LIVE
ALONE
IN THE
FUTURE AS
THE ONLY
SURVIVING
HUMAN."

"WHAT
DO
YOU
WANT
FROM
ME?"

HUMANS
CAN ONLY
LIVE IN THAT
PART OF
THE PAST
CALLED THE
PRESENT.
YOU ARE
CUT OFF
FROM THE
FUTURE. THE
FUTURE IS
SOMETHING
YOU DON'T
KNOW.
SOMETHING
YOU CAN'T
KNOW,
SOMETHING
ELSE
ENTIRELY."

"AH, THE
FUTURE."
"YOU
HUMANS
THINK
THAT THE
PAST, THE
PRESENT,
AND THE
FUTURE ALL
EXIST ON
THE SAME
TIMELINE,
BUT YOU'RE
WRONG."

"IF I HAVE
ANY WILL
TO SPEAK
OF, IT IS
MY WILL.
AND IT WAS
ALSO YOUR
WILL TOO."



"SO IT'S
ALL AC-
CORDING
TO YOUR
WILL?"

"YOU NEVER
HAD ANY
LOVE FOR
THE WORLD.
WHY DO YOU
HESITATE?"

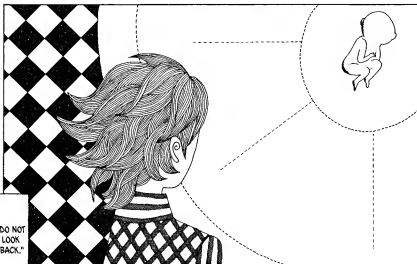


"SO IT WAS
YOUR WILL
THAT STOLE
MY WIFE AND
CHILD, MY
FRIENDS, AND
EVERYTHING
I HELD DEAR
FROM ME? AND
YOU'RE
TELLING ME
THAT'S ALSO
MY WILL?"



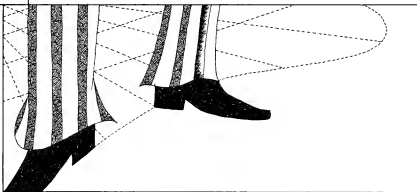


I WAS
SUDDENLY
OVERCOME
WITH AN
EMOTION
THAT WAS
NEITHER
EXACTLY
ANGER OR
SORROW.

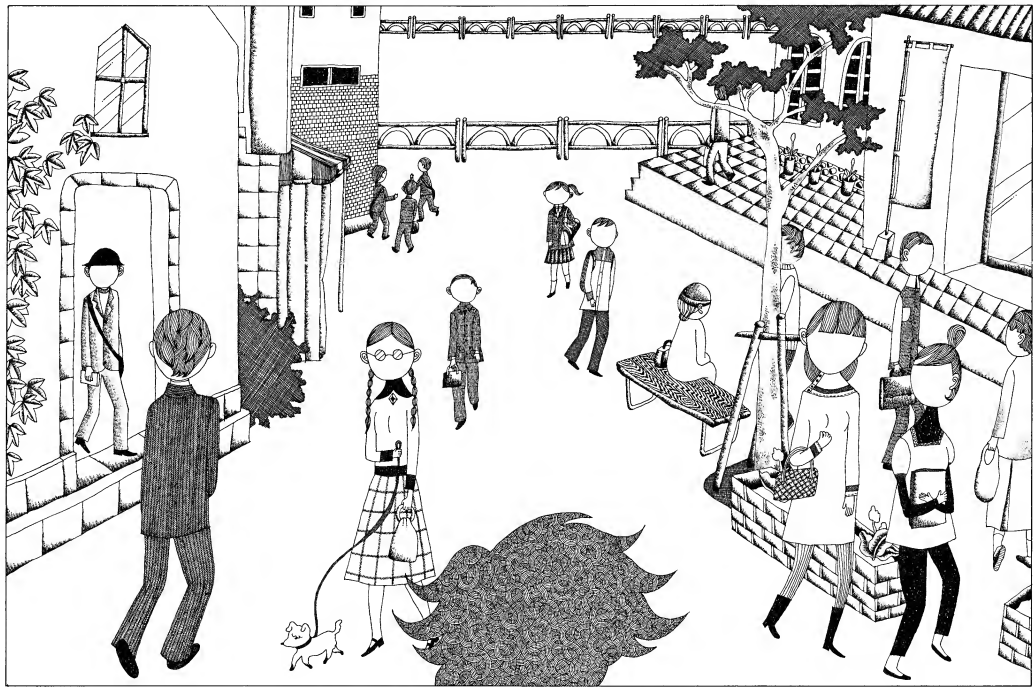


"DO NOT
LOOK
BACK."

"I REFUSE!"
I YELLED.



I LOOKED
BACK.



I BEGAN
TO WALK.

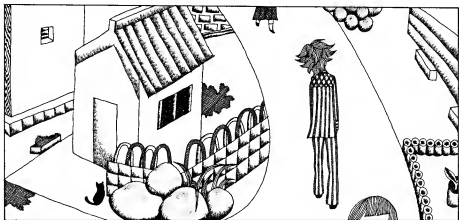
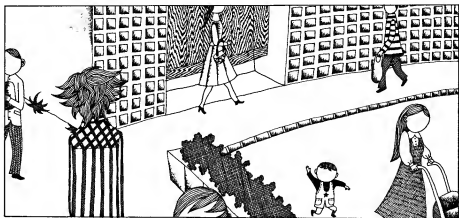
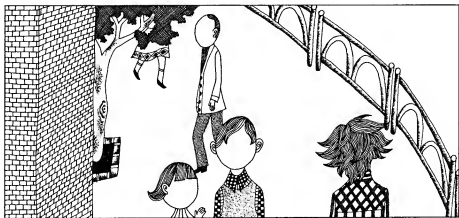
"YOU FOOL.
YOU FOOL."
I COULD
HEAR THE
VOICE OF
THE FUTURE.

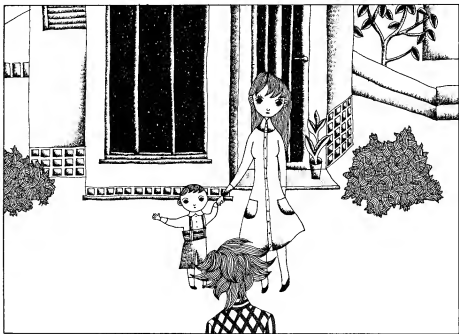


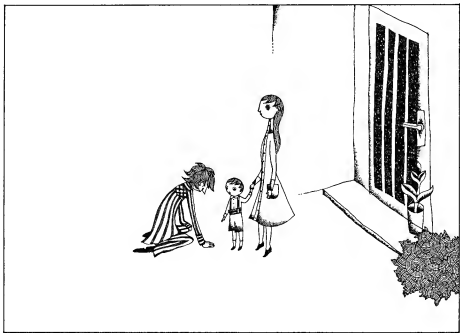
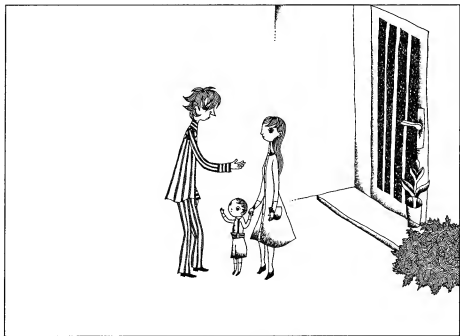
I BEGAN
TO WALK.

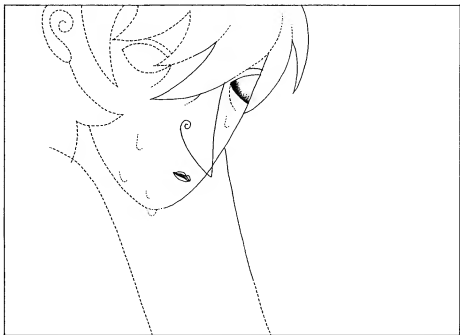
TOWARDS THE
PRESENT,
TOWARDS THE
PAST CALLED
THE PRESENT,
TOWARDS THE
NOTHINGNESS
CALLED THE
PAST. I BEGAN
TO WALK AS
IF DRAWN BY
SOMETHING
OTHER THAN
MY OWN WILL.













CH. 11

INTO THE NIGHT





I AWOKE
AT MY
DESK.



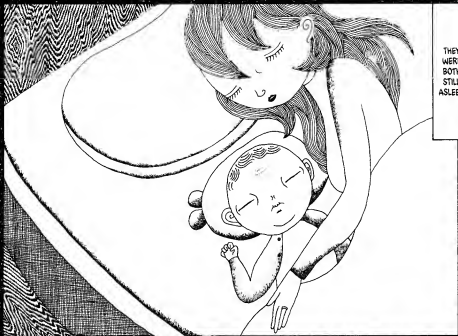
MY
SLEEVE
WAS
DAMP.



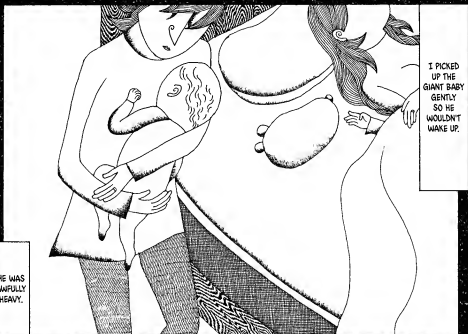
SOON,
MY CHILD
WOULD
START TO
CRY, AND
MY WIFE
WOULD
WAKE UP.

I PROBABLY
HADN'T EVEN
BEEN ASLEEP
FOR AN HOUR
THE SKY HAD
GROWN A
BIT DARK.

I WALKED
DOWN-
STAIRS
TO THE
NURSERY.



THEY
WERE
BOTH
STILL
ASLEEP.



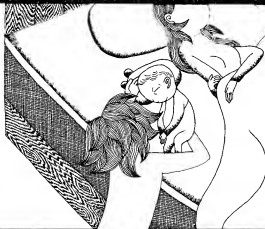
I PICKED
UP THE
GIANT BABY
GENTLY
SO HE
WOULDN'T
WAKE UP.

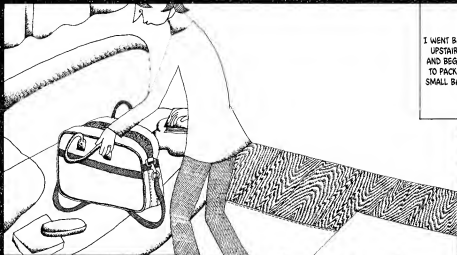
HE WAS
AWFULLY
HEAVY.

THE THOUGHT
SUDDENLY
FLITTED
THROUGH MY
HEAD THAT
MAYBE HE
WAS JUST
LIVING IN HIS
OWN TIME.



I PUT HIM
BACK ON
THE BED.





I WENT BACK
UPSTAIRS
AND BEGAN
TO PACK A
SMALL BAG.



FROM
THIS
HOUSE.

I DECIDED
TO GET OUT
FROM THIS
FROZEN TIME.



AND
LEAVE.



WHEN
I WAS
FINISHED
PACKING,
I WENT
DOWN
TO THE
NURSERY
AGAIN.



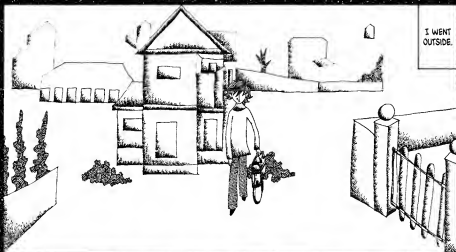
I LOOKED
DOWN AT
THE FAMILY
I WOULD
PROBABLY
NEVER
SEE AGAIN.



I GENTLY
TOUCHED
MY WIFE'S
CHEEK FOR
THE FIRST
TIME IN
TWO YEARS.



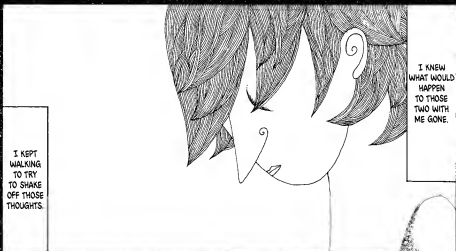
TEARS
FLOWED
DOWN
MY FACE
THOUGH
I DIDN'T
FEEL SAD.



I WENT
OUTSIDE.



I WALKED.



I KNEW
WHAT WOULD
HAPPEN
TO THOSE
TWO WITH
ME GONE.

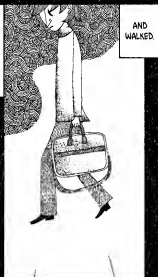
I KEPT
WALKING
TO TRY
TO SHAKE
OFF THOSE
THOUGHTS.



I WALKED
SLOWLY
STEP BY
STEP DOWN
THE ROAD
I USUALLY
TRAVERSED
BY BUS.



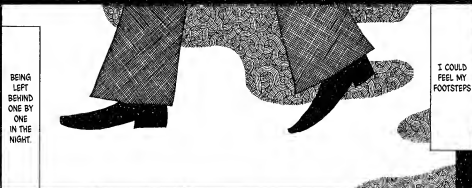
THE SUN
WENT
DOWN.



AND
WALKED.



I WALKED



BEING
LEFT
BEHIND
ONE BY
ONE
IN THE
NIGHT.

I COULD
FEEL MY
FOOTSTEPS

I LOOKED
DOWN
AT THE
DISTANT
LIGHTS
OF THE
TOWN.



A black and white illustration of a person with short, dark, wavy hair, wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt and dark trousers. They are walking away from the viewer on a path that curves to the right. A railing with a black and white checkered pattern follows the curve of the path. The background is dark with scattered white dots and short horizontal dashes.

I KEPT
WALKING.
TOWARDS
THE PAST
CALLED THE
PRESENT.

A black and white illustration of the same person from the top panel, walking away from the viewer on a similar path with a checkered railing. The background is dark with scattered white dots and short horizontal dashes.

TOWARDS
THE NOTH-
INGNESS
CALLED
THE PAST.

INTO THE
NIGHT.



AFTERWORD BY NISHIOKA SATORU

THE CONSTITUTION OF JAPAN

ARTICLE 9: RENUNCIATION OF WAR

(1) ASPIRING SINCERELY TO AN INTERNATIONAL PEACE BASED ON JUSTICE AND ORDER, THE JAPANESE PEOPLE FOREVER RENOUNCE WAR AS A SOVEREIGN RIGHT OF THE NATION AND THE THREAT OR USE OF FORCE AS MEANS OF SETTLING INTERNATIONAL DISPUTES.

(2) IN ORDER TO ACCOMPLISH THE AIM OF THE PRECEDING PARAGRAPH, LAND, SEA, AND AIR FORCES, AS WELL AS OTHER WAR POTENTIAL, WILL NEVER BE MAINTAINED. THE RIGHT OF BELLIGERENCY OF THE STATE WILL NOT BE RECOGNIZED.

THERE'S AN APHORISM BY A POLISH POET NAMED STANISŁAW JERZY LEC WHO WAS TRANSLATED INTO JAPANESE BY HASEGAWA SHIROU: "AMONG THE 10 COMMANDMENTS, 'THOU SHALT NOT KILL' RINGS OUT LIKE A WARNING, BUT IT'S IN FACT A DISCOVERY."

IN THE SAME WAY, ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONSTITUTION (ESPECIALLY SECTION 2) IS ALSO A DISCOVERY.

IT'S A MIRACLE BORN OF AN ERA AKIN TO AN EMPTY SPACE IN HISTORY AFTER THE FIRST AND SECOND WORLD WARS WHEN BOTH THE VICTORS AND THE VANQUISHED WERE SICK TO DEATH OF WAR. IT'S A PAIN TO EXPLAIN, SO I'M NOT GOING TO WRITE IT OUT, BUT THE GIST OF IT IS THAT I'M PRO-CONSTITUTION. I PREFER PEACE THAT IS BADLY WRITTEN AND FULL OF CONTRADICTIONS TO WAR THAT IS BEAUTIFUL AND CONSISTENT. I KNOW THERE'S NOTHING TO BE GAINED FROM SAYING THIS RIGHT NOW, BUT IT'S ONE OF THE GREATEST DISCOVERIES WE FOOLISH HUMANS HAVE MADE, AND I CAN'T STAND BY SILENTLY WHEN PEOPLE ARE TRYING TO DESTROY IT. I'M NOT SAYING WE MUST NEVER CHANGE A SINGLE LETTER OF THE CONSTITUTION. THE ISSUE IS WHO CHANGES IT, WHEN, AND WHY.



AT THE VERY LEAST, I DON'T WANT THE LIKES OF THOSE LED ASTRAY BY KOIZUMI AND TAKENAKA, OR THOSE VENTING THEIR FRUSTRATIONS AGAINST PRIME MINISTER FUKUDA TO LAY A FINGER ON IT (PRIME MINISTER FUKUDA MAY ACTUALLY HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE GREATEST PRIME MINISTERS WE HAVE HAD IN THE SENSE THAT HE DIDN'T FIDDLE WITH ANYTHING AT ALL.) JUST AS CHRISTIANS CONTINUE TO BETRAY CHRIST, WE JAPANESE HAVE CONTINUALLY BETRAYED OUR CONSTITUTION. THE CONSTITUTION BOTH GIVES US THE RIGHT TO CHANGE IT AND IMPOSES UPON US THE DUTY TO PROTECT IT. RIGHT NOW, THE JAPANESE PEOPLE DON'T DESERVE A NATIONAL REFERENDUM.

I WANTED TO DEPICT WAR. I THOUGHT THAT IN THIS DAY AND AGE, IT WAS THE DUTY OF ANYONE WHO HAS ANY SORT OF MEANS OR PLATFORM, NO MATTER HOW SMALL (THOUGH I KNEW THAT I WOULDN'T GAIN ANYTHING FROM IT, AND SADLY, AN AUTHOR LIKE ME DRAWING ABOUT WAR WOULDN'T HELP THE PRO-CONSTITUTIONISTS IN ANY WAY.) YEARS PASSED WITH THAT IN MY MIND (MAYBE I WAITED TOO LONG.) I COULDN'T MAKE ANY PROGRESS. WRITING ABOUT WAR IN FICTION IS DIFFICULT. IN THE CAVERNS OF OUR MINDS LURK GHOULS WHO HUNGER FOR GLORY AND EXCITEMENT. NO MATTER HOW WE TRY TO DEPICT THE TRAGEDY OF WAR, IT ALWAYS TAKES ON A TINGE OF GRANDEUR. THE GHOULS SWARM TO THAT. HUMANS EVEN HAVE A TENDENCY TO LONG FOR WAR TO SPARK THAT EXCITEMENT. I DON'T KNOW WHETHER IT'S POSSIBLE TO ENTIRELY EXTINGUISH THAT. THERE'S A SHORT STORY CALLED "THE ANTS" IN A NOVEL BY BORIS VIAN. IT'S A MASTERPIECE THAT DEPICTS ONLY THE FOOLISHNESS, THE RIDICULOUSNESS, AND THE RAW TERROR OF WAR. I WANTED TO DRAW SOMETHING LIKE THAT, BUT I'M NOT CONFIDENT I CAN. YOU MAY SAY I SHOULDN'T PUBLISH ANYTHING IF I'M NOT CONFIDENT, BUT I HAVE MY REASONS.

I WONDER WHAT SHAPE THIS STORY WILL TAKE IN YOUR HEARTS.



"TO MAKE A DECISION, HOWEVER FOOLISH" BY ABE YUKIHIRO

THE STORIES OF NISHIOKA KYODAI ARE ALWAYS SO EXTREMELY CRUEL AND FARCICAL THAT THEY FEEL ALMOST SILLY TO REPEAT. THE CHARACTERS' ACTIONS ARE MEANINGLESS AND NEARLY ALWAYS PASSIVE. THEY GO AROUND IN CIRCLES, AND THEN WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, FOR INSTANCE, THEY'RE JUST LEFT STANDING COMPLETELY STILL. IN OTHER WORDS, IT'S AN ENDING THAT'S NOT AN ENDING, CYNICISM THAT DOESN'T EVEN SERVE AS A CONCLUSION. I DON'T KNOW OF ANY OTHER MANGA THAT MANAGES TO CREATE A WORLD OF STORIES SUCH AS THEIRS WITH THOSE EXTREMELY SIMPLE ELEMENTS.

STILL, THE PATHS OF YOUR OWN NIGHTMARES, WHICH ARE TREATED AS IF THEY ARE UNRELATED TO YOU, ARE BEING WOVEN TOGETHER BY LINES DRAWN WITH AN ALMOST THOUGHTLESS DILLIGENCE UNTIL THEY CONVERGE AT A SINGULAR POINT. THAT POINT OF CONTRADICTION OR ABSURDITY (SOPHISTRY MAYBE) WHERE CLOSING ONESELF OFF BECOMES THE GREATEST ESCAPE OR INACTION BECOMES THE GREATEST ACTION. BUT A STRANGE ECSTASY, NEITHER EXACTLY PLEASANT NOR UNPLEASANT, LIKE WHEN YOUR BREATH SLOWLY RECEDES, MIGHT BE THERE, PERHAPS ACCOMPANING IT LIKE BASSO CONTINUO.

THEIR SECOND FULL-LENGTH WORK, "THE DAY OF SALVATION," SHOWS THAT THE BASIC NISHIOKA KYODAI STYLE HASN'T CHANGED IN THAT REGARD. HOWEVER, WHILE THAT MAY BE TRUE ON THE SURFACE, I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL THAT ON A VERY FUNDAMENTAL LEVEL, THERE IS SOMETHING DIFFERENT ABOUT THIS ONE. IT'S JUST A HUNCH, BUT I'VE HAD THAT FEELING THROUGHOUT ITS SERIALIZATION. JUST LIKE HOW THE AUTHOR COULDN'T HELP BUT BE INCREDIBLY CONSCIOUS OF THE WORLD AFTER THE IRAQ WAR, I COULDN'T HELP BUT THINK THAT THE ENTIRE TIME. HOWEVER, I SHALL POSE THE QUESTION TO MYSELF HERE ONCE AGAIN: WHY DID I FEEL THIS WAY?

THE BASIC SENTIMENTS AND ATTITUDE THAT THE MAIN CHARACTERS SHARE IN THE MANY NISHIOKA STORIES IS ALSO CONSISTENT IN THIS ONE. THE FEELING OF RESIGNATION OR VAGUE CONTEMPT AND SENSE OF POWERLESSNESS TOWARDS A SOCIETY WHICH HAS BEEN SYSTEMATICALLY AND EFFICIENTLY TURNED COMPLETELY GREY AND THE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE FOR THAT WHO AREN'T EVEN CAPABLE OF REALIZING WHAT HAS HAPPENED (ESSENTIALLY LACKING EITHER SELF AWARENESS OR PERHAPS WHAT WE'D CALL A "FACE") IS STILL PRESENT. INSTEAD, THE EXTREME



CONTRAST BETWEEN THE ABSURDITY AND TRAGEDY OF THE MAIN CHARACTER, WHO SEEMS TO LACK ANY MEANS AT ALL TO RESIST THE DETERIORATION OF THE SITUATION (OR PERHAPS I SHOULD SAY THE "COMPLETION" OF IT,) RUNNING ABOUT THE SCORCHED EARTH IN HIS PAJAMAS IN THE MIDDLE OF WARTIME IS MORE APPARENT THAN EVER. AND WHAT'S MORE, FOR SOME REASON, IT'S ALL WHILE HE'S GOT THIS BABY STUCK TO HIS FINGER. IT'S SUCH AN IDIOTIC SPECTACLE. THIS EXQUISITE BLEND OF CRUELTY AND FARCE IS FURTHER BEING REINFORCED AS THEIR SIGNATURE STYLE.

IN THAT SCORCHED EARTH, A ENVIRONMENT HAS FORMED THAT I'D EVEN DARE CALL HYPERCAPITALISM. DEAD BODIES ARE BEING SOLD DURING WARTIME TO MAXIMIZE PROFITS, AND THE LOGIC OF THIS KIND OF UNABASHED CAPITALISM ONLY CAUSES THAT SYSTEM TO CONTINUE TO REVOLVE FASTER AND FASTER. WITHIN IT, THERE IS NO ROOM FOR SENTIMENTALITIES. WHAT ADDS TO THE CHAOS IS THAT IT'S NOT SIMPLY THAT YOU CAN'T FIGHT AGAINST THE SITUATION, BUT IT'S AS IF YOU CAN'T EVEN FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON. THOUGH ALL YOU CAN SEE IS WASTELAND, THE TV STILL TURNS ON, AND YOUR WORKPLACE STILL STANDS. IS THE TOWN SAFE AND SOUND, OR HAS THE WORLD ALREADY ENDED? WITH THIS CONSTANTLY CHANGING CONFLICTING INFORMATION, IT BECOMES HARD TO UNDERSTAND WHAT'S HAPPENING AT ALL.

WHEN I DESCRIBE IT IN THIS WAY, IT'S ALMOST LIKE HOW THE WORLD SEEMED POST IRAQ WAR LEADING UP TO 9-11. NATURALLY, I MEAN THIS IN A SYMBOLIC SENSE, BUT DOESN'T IT BEAR TOO UNCANNY OF A RESEMBLANCE? AT THE TIME, AFTER BEING WHIPPED UP BY ALL SORTS OF UNRELIABLE INFORMATION ABOUT TERRORISM AND WHAT NOT, WE WOUND UP IN A PLACE WHERE THE MORE WE TRIED TO FIND OUT WHAT WAS GOING ON THE LESS WE UNDERSTOOD. IN THE END, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE WHOLE WORLD NOW KNOWS THIS IS THE CASE, THERE'S NO SIGN THAT WE'LL BE ABLE TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF ANY OF THE PEOPLE WHO WERE UNILATERALLY INVADED WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A JUSTIFIABLE REASON. IT WAS ALREADY TOO LATE FOR MUCH OF THAT. OF COURSE, IF ONE WERE TO STATE THAT THE WORLD HAS ALWAYS BEEN LAWLESS, THEN I GUESS THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO SAY ABOUT IT. EITHER WAY, IT'S AT LEAST CLEAR THAT THE RATIONALE OF MONEY MAKING IS COMING FIRST. THERE'S NO SPACE FOR CONSIDERING THE MISFORTUNES OF PEOPLE IN FARAWAY COUNTRIES. OUR OWN ECONOMY AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF OUR SOCIETY UNDERFOOT ARE BEGINNING TO SHUDDER AND FALL APART AS WE WATCH IN SHOCK. THOUGH WE COULD FIND OURSELVES IN A SITUATION TOMORROW WHERE ALL WE CAN DO IS FLAIL WILDLY, THE PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE WITH STEADFAST FAITH THAT THINGS WILL CONTINUE AS THEY



ARE KEEP THE WHEEL ROLLING (BUT I SUPPOSE THAT'S REALLY ALL ANYONE CAN DO.) FURTHERMORE, WITH THE ACTUALIZATION OF GLOBALISM, A WORD WHICH HAS BECOME DIFFICULT TO USE BECAUSE OF HOW WORN OUT IT'S BEGUN TO GET, THE FACT THAT OUR OWN FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES ARE RIDING ON THE HEAPING MOUNDS OF CORPSES OF OTHERS HAS BECOME MORE VISIBLE THAN IN THE PAST. WITHOUT REALIZING IT, WE ARE LIVING IN A WORLD WHERE WE TAKE OUR DAILY MEALS ACROSS A GLASS WALL WITH THRONGS OF STARVING PEOPLE STARING AT US ON THE OTHER SIDE.

THAT'S RIGHT, IF YOU LIFT YOUR EYES FROM THIS NIGHTMARE AND LOOK OUT THE WINDOW, YOU'LL SEE A WORLD NOT MUCH UNLIKE A DREAM SPRAWLING BEFORE YOU.

BY THAT DEFINITION, RATHER THAN SAYING THAT SOMETHING ABOUT THE WORKS OF NISHIOKA KYODAI HAS CHANGED, IT WOULD PERHAPS BE MORE ACCURATE TO SAY THAT THE DISTANCE FROM THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THINGS HAS BEEN DECISIVELY ALTERED, AND THAT CAN ONLY BRING ABOUT A QUALITATIVE CHANGE IN THE APPEARANCE OF THE RESULTING WORK. IN THIS WAY, WHAT I REALIZE NOW IS THAT HOWEVER DISCONNECTED FROM THE WORLD AND DEEPLY WITHDRAWN INTO CLOSED SPACES THAT THE STORIES OF NISHIOKA KYODAI MAY BE, THEY'RE ACTUALLY PARADOXICALLY OPEN TO THE WORLD IN A VERY PERCEPTIVE WAY.

LET'S RETURN TO THE WORK ITSELF. THERE ARE TWO BABIES THAT SHOW UP IN THIS STORY.

ONE IS THE SON WHO LIVES IN "THE PAST CALLED THE PRESENT." THE OTHER IS THE BABY KNOWN AS "THE FUTURE," WHO WAS BORN IN THE CREVICES OF THE WASTELAND AND SURVIVES BY ABSORBING THE LIFE FORCE OF THE MAIN CHARACTER. "THE PAST CALLED THE PRESENT" RESEMBLES THE BIZARRE CREATURE FROM "ERASERHEAD" AND ONLY GETS BIGGER AND HEAVIER. TIME FOR HIM HAS ESSENTIALLY STOPPED, AND HIS MOUNTING WEIGHT BEARS DOWN UPON THE PROTAGONIST AS A FEELING OF BEING TRAPPED IN THE "PRESENT." AS FOR THE CHILD THAT CALLS ITSELF "THE FUTURE," AFTER HAVING ITS WAY WITH THE MAIN CHARACTER AS IT GOES IN THE STORY, IT SURPRISINGLY PRONOUNCES THAT HUMANS HAVE BEEN "CUT OFF" FROM THE FUTURE THE ENTIRE TIME. THE SEQUENCE IS SO COLDHEARTED THAT IT'S ALMOST REFRESHING. "YOU HUMANS THINK THAT THE PAST, THE PRESENT, AND THE FUTURE ALL EXIST ON THE SAME TIMELINE. BUT YOU'RE WRONG." "THE FUTURE IS SOMETHING YOU DON'T KNOW, SOMETHING YOU CAN'T KNOW, SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY."



I WONDER WHAT THE AUTHOR (AND THE READERS TOO) OF THE BOOK "MOMO," THE CHILDREN'S STORY ABOUT THE BRAVE LITTLE GIRL WHO SAVED THE WORLD FROM THE WILES OF THE TIME THIEVES, WOULD THINK IF THEY READ THAT PART. AS AN ORDINARY PERSON WHO COULDN'T POSSIBLY KNOW THE GREATEST SECRETS OF TIME, I HAVE NO IDEA WHICH OF THE TEMPORAL STRUCTURES IN THE TWO STORIES IS CORRECT, AND I COULD EVEN SAY THAT IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER. BUT IF I WERE TO CONSIDER THEM AGAINST THE STATE OF THE WORLD RIGHT NOW, I DON'T THINK I'D BE ALONE IN FINDING THE BITING CYNICISM OF NISHIOKA KYODAI TO BE MORE PERSUASIVE. AFTER ALL, I HAVEN'T THE FOGGIEST HOW WE COULD ESCAPE THIS ACCELERATING SYSTEM OF CAPITAL AND TIME. FOR NOW, THAT'S ALL I CAN HONESTLY SAY. IN THAT SENSE, WE'RE NOT SO DIFFERENT FROM THE ANONYMOUS, POWERLESS PROTAGONISTS OF THE NISHIOKA WORLD.

BUT STORIES ARE AN INTERESTING THING. HERE, THE NISHIOKA PROTAGONIST SHOWS US SOME UNEXPECTED SIDES TO HIM. THERE ARE TWO SUCH SCENES THAT FOLLOW.

WHEN HE ENCOUNTERS THIS "SALVATION" THAT HE SHOULD'VE KNOWN BEFOREHAND DIDN'T EXIST AND WHEN THE "FUTURE" POINTS OUT THAT HE "NEVER HAD ANY LOVE FOR THE WORLD," THE MAIN CHARACTER IS "SUDDENLY OVERCOME WITH AN EMOTION THAT WAS NEITHER EXACTLY ANGER OR SORROW." HE REJECTS "SALVATION," TURNS HEEL ON HIS OWN, AND "FOOLISH" THOUGH IT MAY BE, BEGINS TO WALK TOWARDS THE "PAST CALLED THE PRESENT." IT'S NOT WISDOM OR PURPOSE THAT SPUR HIS STEPS FORWARD, BUT IT'S INSTEAD "FOOLISH"NESS THAT PASSES HIM ON.

HE'S GRASPING SOMEWHERE ONTO THE ACT OF BEING A FOOL, BUT HE'S ALSO LEARNED OF THE NOTHINGNESS AND THE IMPASSE OF "THE PAST CALLED THE PRESENT." WAR WILL HAPPEN, AND WHILE AWARE THAT EVERYONE WILL BE AT THE WHIMS OF THE WORLD, HE STILL PACKS HIS BAGS AND LEAVES. WHERE WILL HE GO, AND WHAT HAS HE DECIDED TO DO WHEN HE KNOWS THAT SUCH BEHAVIOR ON HIS OWN IS FOOLISH? IS HIS DEPARTURE A WANDERING? AN ACTION? AN ESCAPE? OR PERHAPS A SUICIDE? AND JUST HOW MUCH DIFFERENT IS THE FOOLISHNESS OF KNOWING THAT YOU ARE BEING FOOLISH AND THE FOOLISHNESS OF JUST MERELY BEING A FOOL?

WHATEVER IT MAY BE, THE PROTAGONIST REFUSES "SALVATION" FROM "THE FUTURE" AND LEAVES ON A JOURNEY "INTO THE NIGHT."

